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NEWS WORTH SHARING.

More farms put under quarantine over avian flu

Officials awaiting test results to confirm whether any birds at farms were infected PAGE 3

'It's a really sick and twisted day for it to happen'

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Vancouver to host Davis Cup once again

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METRO HELPS YOU PICK OUT THE SEASON'S BEST SUIT WITH A FUN, FESTIVE EDGE PAGE 40

Suspect nabbed in Mountie shooting

Kamloops. Injured corporal in critical but stable condition

A 36-year-old man who is known to police was arrested by members of an emergency-response team in Kamloops, just hours after an RCMP officer was shot and critically wounded.

RCMP Supt. Brad Mueller said Wednesday that police helicopters and dogs were also involved in the search for the suspect who allegedly shot Cpl. Jean Michaud earlier in the day in Kamloops.

Michaud, a member with 13 years' experience and the father of two young children, was in critical but stable condition, he said.

"The events are, you know, a sobering reminder of the dangers that police officers face every day while they are serving and protecting their respective communities, and I can't tell you the impact that an incident (like this) has on our policing community," Mueller said.

He couldn't reveal the name of the suspect, who had not yet been charged.

Police work the scene of a shooting in Kamloops on Wednesday. A 36-year-old man has been arrested in the shooting of a Mountie who stopped a vehicle Wednesday morning. DAVE EAGLES/KAMLOOPS THIS WEEK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

The suspect received an injury, Mueller said, adding the RCMP contacted the Independent Investigations Office of B.C., the police watchdog that investigates serious incidents involving the province's police officers.

The police watchdog confirmed in a statement emailed early in the evening that it will be investigating because it has "confirmation of a serious injury to the affected person."

Hours earlier, at about 2:45 a.m., the officer had pulled over a vehicle in a residential area of the city. He was shot by a man inside a white, four-door Chrysler Intrepid, while another officer who had come as backup exchanged gunfire.

Police launched an intensive search, blocked off the area and evacuated some residents for what they said were public-safety reasons. The shooting also prompted false media alerts that arrests had been made.

Mueller told reporters hours after the shooting that the 40-year-old officer underwent emergency surgery.

"The doctors were very happy with how he responded with the surgery," he said.

Mueller said Michaud was wearing a bulletproof vest and driving a marked police cruiser as he approached a vehicle as part of an ongoing investigation.

"I can say that our officer was fired upon as he approached the suspect vehicle, and the backup officer who was also in attendance returned fire towards that vehicle," he said.

Dennis Maruschy, who lives a block and a half from the shooting scene, said he was awakened by the sound of gunfire.

"It sounded like one guy emptying a clip — pop, pop, pop, pop," Maruschy said. "It sounded like someone emptying a clip in a semi-automatic."

THE CANADIAN PRESS, KAMLOOPS THIS WEEK, CFJC

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Massive deal

Petronas delaying $36B decision on B.C. natural-gas investment

Malaysian energy giant Petronas said Wednesday it's delaying its proposed liquefied-natural-gas terminal near Prince Rupert, even though it's pleased with recent moves the provincial government has made to make the nascent LNG industry more competitive.

Petronas acknowledged the B.C. government has "brought resolution to key policy matters," such as establishing a tax regime for LNG firms, detailing offsets for greenhouse-gas emissions and gaining support from First Nations.

But even still, the company said the conditions aren't right to proceed with the multibillion-dollar project.

Costs need to be lowered in order for the Pacific Northwest LNG project to go ahead, especially in light of crude prices that have dropped below $70 US a barrel.

The Malaysian firm's total investment of $36 billion covers the LNG plant, shale fields in northeastern B.C. and a pipeline to connect the two.

Petronas is the lead partner in the LNG terminal, with companies from China, Japan, India and Brunei holding minority stakes.

Despite the delay, both the B.C. government and the company struck a positive tone, expressing optimism the project will eventually proceed.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Two additional farms in the Fraser Valley were placed under quarantine Wednesday following an outbreak of avian flu. JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Two more B.C. farms under quarantine

Avian flu. Outbreak began at a turkey farm in Abbotsford and a chicken farm in Chilliwack

Two more farms in southwestern British Columbia were placed under quarantine Wednesday as officials attempted to contain an outbreak of avian influenza, though it wasn't yet clear whether any birds at the new sites were actually infected.

The announcement brought the number of farms in B.C.'s Fraser Valley under quarantine to four, and it came as several markets in Asia imposed restrictions on Canadian or B.C. poultry.

The outbreak began at a turkey farm in Abbotsford and a chicken farm in Chilliwack, which were quarantined earlier this week after birds at both sites tested positive for H5 avian influenza. A combined total of 18,000 birds at the farms have either died or will be euthanized.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency said it placed the additional two farms under quarantine after learning they each received chickens from the infected Chilliwack operation last week. One of the new farms is in Chilliwack, while the other is in Abbotsford. One of those two farms has also seen unexpected bird deaths.

Dr. Harpreet Kochhar, Canada's chief veterinary officer, said the food-inspection agency is awaiting test results to confirm whether any birds at the farms were infected.

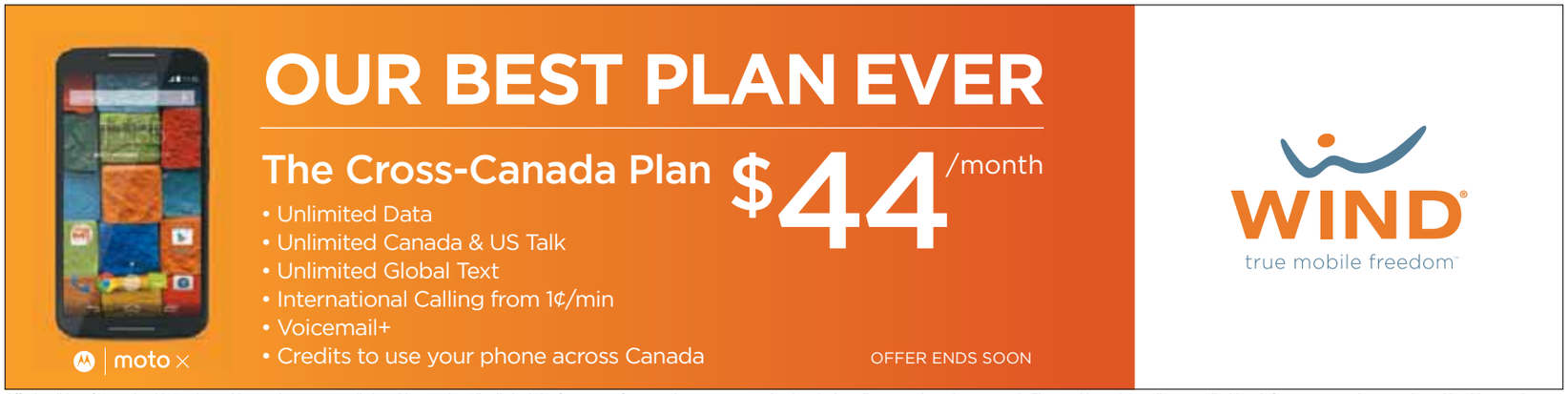
"This is just a suspicion," Kochhar said during a conference call with reporters.

"There is also a risk, given that there is an integrated poultry industry in the Fraser Valley, that there might be situations where other at-risk farms are identified."

Officials are also waiting for test results to determine the specific N-subtype of the virus involved. Of particular concern is whether the virus is the dangerous H5N1 strain or H5N8, which is currently affecting farms in the Netherlands.

Officials have cautioned that the virus does not pose a risk to consumers if poultry meat is properly handled and cooked, though in rare cases it can be transmitted to people who work in close contact with the animals.

Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan have all imposed varying restrictions on poultry from B.C. due to the avian influenza outbreak. THE CANADIAN PRESS



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Annual Downtown Eastside calendar sales off to a slow start

Hope in Shadows.
Unusually cold weather contributing to sharp decline

MATT KIELTYKA
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Vendors selling the annual Hope in Shadows Downtown Eastside calendars are hoping a December sales push will help get them through a slow start to the holiday season.

Every year, Pivot Legal Society provides training for approximately 150 people to sell upward of 16,000 calendars, letting them take home half of the $20 proceeds for themselves.

The program can give DTES residents a crucial financial boost during the holiday season, and sales are traditionally strong.

But program co-ordinator Carolyn Wong said Wednesday that poor weather since the calendar's launch in October has hurt sales.

"That's left some of the vendors feeling discouraged," she said.

Peter Thompson, selling calendars for the eighth year, has seen a sharp decline in sales.

"When it rains and it's a cold rain, nobody wants to stop. They keep going to where they need to go," said Thompson while selling calendars at his usual spot at the corner of Robson and Howe streets Wednesday afternoon. "Overall, (sales are) quite a bit lower since last year."

Clear weather in recent weeks has helped business pick up slightly, he said.

Thompson, whose photos also appear in this year's calendar, says it is an easy sell once people take the time to learn about it.

Peter Thompson sells Hope in Shadows calendars at Robson and Howe streets on Wednesday. MATT KIELTYKA/METRO

"They like the idea of the calendar itself because it helps people," he said. "You tell them the story of the calendar and what it's all about, and they want to buy it because it helps people, especially around this time of the season."

Wong said sales for the calendar are traditionally strongest during the first two weeks after the calendar's launch and in December as people shop for holiday gifts.

She hopes a strong December can help offset the calendar's slow start.

"We think of the program as an accessible employment opportunity for people affected by poverty and homelessness," said Wong. "When people buy a calendar, they're supporting a local community initiative. There's really beautiful artwork, and people gain an understanding of the DTES community through the eyes of the people that live there. There are some really moving stories."

Vendors tend to frequent high-traffic areas throughout Vancouver, and people can also find a list of places to buy the $20 calendars on Pivot's website.

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Report. Vancouverites have double the average debt

It's not the best time of year to be thrifty, but West Coasters might want to think twice before swiping their credit cards.

The average Metro Vancouverite has twice the amount of consumer debt than the average Canadian, according to an Equifax Canada report released Wednesday.

We owe an average of $41,077 — excluding mortgage payments — compared to $20,891 across the rest of the country. As a whole, Canadians owe a whopping $1.5 trillion.

A local licensed trustee in consumer insolvency blames the high cost of housing and living in the Lower Mainland as the driving factor behind the consumer debt. On top of that, wages haven't risen as much as they have in the past to keep up with the cost of shelter. When people spend a large proportion of their income on mortgages or rent, there might not be enough left over to keep up with other expenses, said Blake Elyea, senior VP at Grant Thornton.

"Where there's a shortage of income, people turn to credit cards and lines of credit.… It can become out of control in certain situations," Elyea said.

Elyea recommends setting a strict budget, especially before going holiday shopping, and sticking to it.

He suggests tracking expenses for a month or two to avoid the "latté effect," how quickly money can fly from wallets when one spends $5 on coffee and $10 on lunch. (That's about $300 per month for those eating out on most work days.)

Debt is a problem that often gets pushed under the rug due to embarrassment and a desire to keep up with the Joneses, Elyea said. While teaching people how to budget earlier could help, he doesn't see a magical solution the issue.

"It has to fall back to the individual. You have to be responsible and you have to mange your money."

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

West Side. CO poisoning sends family to hospital

A family of five was rushed to hospital with possible carbon monoxide poisoning from a home on Vancouver's West Side early Wednesday.

Firefighters responded to a medical call from a home in the 2,700 block of West 34th Avenue shortly after midnight, said Capt. Carol Messenger of Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services.

Captain Messenger said it was unclear if the house had a CO detector. GETTY

When crews arrived, they found two adults and three children — a boy and a girl in their teens and a girl who is about six years old — sitting and lying down on the front steps of the home, said Messenger.

"Two of the family members had decreased level of consciousness and the other three were definitely showing signs of carbon monoxide poisoning," Messenger told Metro.

Paramedics assessed the family and transported two of the family members to B.C. Children's Hospital and another two to Vancouver General Hospital, according to B.C. Ambulance Service. For privacy reasons, B.C. Ambulance Service could not comment on the current condition of the patients. THANDI FLETCHER/METRO

Surrey

Man charged in string of robberies

Surrey RCMP say they have arrested and charged a lone suspect with 21 counts of property-related offences.

The arrests stem from a number of residential thefts and break-and-enters in the Cloverdale and South Surrey areas between Nov. 24 and 26.

The suspect was arrested in the 9600 block of 192nd Street on Nov. 26 by the RCMP's auto crime and property crime target teams following a brief on-foot pursuit.

Curtis Anderson, 22, is currently in custody and is expected to appear in court Thursday.

RCMP remind people to stay vigilant, as holiday shopping poses a prime opportunity for thieves.

MATT KIELTYKA/METRO

If you spend just $15 on local goods or food this holiday season, Loco B.C. believes it could add millions to the local economy. CONTRIBUTED

B.C. businesses want you to keep it local

Holiday shopping. Group says just $15 on B.C.-made items could equal millions for the economy

EMILY JACKSON
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A bottle of Okanagan wine, a few bars of chocolate made in the Downtown Eastside or beeswax candles at a local craft fair.

These gifts only cost about $15, but Loco B.C. founder Amy Robinson argues they could make millions of dollars of difference for the province's economy.

If every British Columbian spent one per cent of their holiday spending (about $15) on local goods or food, it could add 3,100 jobs and $94 million in wages to the economy annually, Robinson said Wednesday, the midway mark of B.C.'s third annual Buy Local Week.

"When you buy with a local business, your money re-circulates through the community," Robinson said. "That strengthens our economic and social fabric."

Her numbers are based on two studies, one conducted by her organization and one by local union CUPE.

The math has drummed up support from the province and the Vancouver Economic Commission.

"I'm happy to shine some light, put a spotlight on local operators," Vancouver Economic Commission CEO Ian McKay said Wednesday.

It can be a challenge for smaller businesses to compete with large multinationals with big advertising budgets, especially at this time of year, McKay said.

But he encourages people to head into local shops to see the passion they put into their work, a dedication he finds inspiring.

Small businesses employ about a million people in B.C., according to the province.

For the rest of the season, Loco B.C. will be sharing stories from small businesses across the province and advertising events such as Christmas markets and craft fairs.

For more information, visit bcbuylocal.com.

Causeway plan 'strikes a balance': Cyclists

There is no way the province will please everyone when it attempts to improve safety on the narrow causeway connecting Downtown Vancouver and the Lions Gate Bridge.

But cycling advocacy group HUB believes the proposed changes to the roadway — the province recommends widening the road and installing safety fences at the expense of 14 trees — "strike a balance" between safety and the environment.

"Cyclists don't get everything they want, and we don't get to save every tree," HUB representative Jeff Leigh said Wednesday.

Cyclists would have preferred one-way pedestrian and cycling traffic on each side of the roadway, but compromised since that would have required chopping about 200 trees, Leigh said.

HUB, along with representatives from Stanley Park and the park board, participated in a yearlong consultation with the Ministry of Transportation to come up with the plan after a cyclist was killed on the causeway in 2013.

The proposal recommends one-way bike traffic on the west side and two-way pedestrian and one-way cycling traffic on the east side of the roadway. Despite concerns over how the cyclists and pedestrians will share the space on the east side, HUB supports the plan. (With the caveat that the province needs to put up some incredibly clear way-finding signage.)

The public is being asked for input into how the cyclists and pedestrians should share the widened east path and whether there should be two or three passing lanes for cyclists on the west side.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

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After much improvement, Chester the whale moved to a bigger pool

Vancouver Aquarium. To continue muscle development, staff move the rescued false killer whale to a bigger space

THANDI FLETCHER
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Christmas came early for Chester the rescued false killer whale, who got some new digs at the Vancouver Aquarium on Wednesday.

After five months of round-the-clock care at the Marine Mammal Rescue Centre, aquarium staff transported the young male calf to a larger pool in the aquarium's research area Wednesday morning.

"I'm very happy with his progress," said Martin Haulena, head veterinarian at the Vancouver Aquarium. "He's gained a lot of strength, a lot of mobility and he's quite a strong swimmer."

Chester's transfer was "completely boring," which is exactly what staff had hoped for, said Haulena.

Although he had outgrown his previous pool, Haulena said the whale calf was hesitant at first when placed in the new pool, the volume of which is about six times greater.

"He's spending a lot of time exploring and was a little tentative at first," he said. "He didn't want to use the whole pool but he's slowly but surely using more and more of it now."

The larger pool allows the young whale to swim faster and dive deeper — important activities for its muscle development, said Haulena.

Staff can also control the water temperature more easily, which makes for a more comfortable habitat for a false killer whale, a species that requires slightly warmer temperatures than that of B.C. waters at this time of year.

Quoted

"He's spending a lot of time exploring and was a little tentative at first."

Martin Haulena,
Vancouver Aquarium head veterinarian,
on Chester's adjustment

Found stranded on a Tofino beach in July, Chester was underweight, dehydrated and near death when aquarium staff rescued the young calf.

Although Chester's chance of survival was initially estimated at just 10 per cent, the young whale surprised aquarium staff when he responded well to treatment.

No other stranded false killed whale has ever survived after being rescued, said Haulena.

In the coming months, Haulena said an independent Fisheries and Oceans Canada panel will assess Chester and determine next steps for his recovery.

Vancouver Aquarium staff move Chester into his new pool early Wednesday morning. COURTESY VANCOUVER AQUARIUM

Cutting down on email-checking could reduce stress: UBC

UBC has just released a new study linking constant email-checking to stress. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Feeling stressed? You may be suffering from inbox burnout.

That's the diagnosis from University of B.C. researcher Kostadin Kushlev, who suggests hitting pause on email checking.

Kushlev is the lead author of a new study that found cutting down on checking email to three times daily for a week could help reduce psychological stress.

"Our findings showed that people felt less stress when they checked their email less often," he told Metro.

Researchers had 124 adults take part in the study, including students, financial analysts, medical professionals and others, with one group instructed to limit checking their email to three times a day for a week.

Another group was told to check their email as often as they could, which turned out to be about the same number of times they normally checked their email before the study.

Researchers then reversed the instructions for the participants in a subsequent week, and had them answer brief daily surveys that included information about their stress levels.

Although participants found it difficult to limit checking their email, Kushlev said his team found they still reported feeling less stressed when they changed their inbox behaviour.

"This is what makes our obvious-in-hindsight findings so striking," he said. "People find it difficult to resist the temptation of checking email, and yet resisting this temptation reduces their stress."

The findings suggest that limiting email checking could cut down on stress and have potential health benefits, said Kushlev.

"If you manage to force yourself to resist the temptation to check your email, you might actually end up with some benefits for reduced stress," he said.

THANDI FLETCHER/METRO

Vancouver Island

B.C. government awards $200,000 contract to study Gabriola bridge

A $200,000 contract has been awarded to a Colorado-based company to study the feasibility of linking Gabriola Island and Vancouver Island by bridge.

CH2M Hill Canada Ltd., which has offices across Canada but is based in Englewood, Colo., will study potential bridge locations, cost estimates and compare a fixed link with existing ferry service.

A Ministry of Transportation statement says the company will not assess the level of public support for a fixed link with the island located east of Nanaimo.

The study was announced in September by Transportation Minister Todd Stone after hundreds of locals who were tired of ferry fare increases and service cuts petitioned the government.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Langley

Arrest made after Subway 'takeover'

Langley RCMP say charges have been laid against a suspect after a violent "takeover"-style robbery at a Subway restaurant in Aldergrove.

The incident occurred Nov. 18 and involved two masked men entering the store, jumping over the counter and pointing a firearm at the clerk. They loaded money from the cash register into a bag before fleeing the scene.

Forensic investigators matched fingerprints from the scene to a 20-year-old Langley resident. David Sini Holani was then arrested and charged with robbery and use of an imitation firearm.

The second robber has not yet been identified by police, but is described as a Caucasian male, 22- to 25-years-old, who was wearing a beige hoodie, a white jacket and black pants.

MATT KIELTYKA/METRO

Abbotsford

Sketch released after sex assault

Abbotsford police have released a sketch as they attempt to find the man responsible for a sexual assault at Mill Lake Park on Nov. 20.

Police say a woman went for a walk that night when a male grabbed her from behind.

The culprit is described as a Caucasian male, 30 to 40 years of age, five foot nine inches tall. He was wearing dark track pants, white running shoes and a dark hoodie with a circular design. The man had stubble and there appeared to be short dark hair under his hoodie.

The police sketch. CONTRIBUTED

MATT KIELTYKA/METRO

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15-year term wasn't excessive: Court

Corruption. B.C. Court of Appeal rules sentence given a border guard who accepted bribes was just, as he put Canada at risk

The B.C. Court of Appeal has ruled that a 15-year sentence was not excessive for a corrupt border guard who took a bribe to allow cocaine to be smuggled into Canada from the U.S.

Baljinder Kandola had argued that a 15-year sentence was too harsh and 13 years was more appropriate, when compared to the 12-year sentence of one of his co-conspirators.

But a three-judge Appeal Court panel disagreed, noting that Kandola's corruption put all of Canadian society at risk because Kandola was in a "special position of trust."

Quoted

"In my view, corruption by a public official, while thankfully rare, is indeed a crime deserving of a very severe sanction." Appeal Court Justice Nicole Garson

"The type of corruption evidenced by this case has a corrosive effect not just on his former colleagues, but also on public trust in law enforcement. Public confidence in the administration of justice requires severe sanctions in the rare instances when a law enforcement officer does succumb to such temptation.

"In Mr. Kandola's case, the combination of importing cocaine, which leads to untold misery for those addicted, combined with the abuse of trust while facilitating illegal importation of cocaine, the very task with which he was entrusted to deter, must lead to a lengthy sentence," the judges concluded.

After a 41-day trial, Kandola was convicted of conspiracy to import cocaine, importing cocaine, breach of trust by facilitating the importation of cocaine, and accepting a benefit, while employed as a Canadian Border Services Agency officer, with intent to facilitate importing cocaine.

NEAL HALL/FOR METRO

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Vehicles wait at the BC Ferries terminal in Tsawwassen in July 2007.
JEFF HODSON/METRO FILE

BC Ferries. Off-peak discounts in the works

BC Ferries says its customers should be able to reserve trips like they would book airline tickets and hotel rooms and receive discounted fares online at off-peak travel times.

Company president Mike Corrigan said Wednesday that the service has submitted a plan to BC Ferry Commissioner Gord Macatee as part of a cost-cutting operation to reduce the pressure on potential fare increases.

He said the Fare Flexibility and Digital Experience Initiative will modernize how BC Ferries sets prices, markets travel, manages loads and discounts fares at off-peak travel times through e-commerce and information-and-technology upgrades.

Corrigan said fare discounts haven't been determined, but the current reservation-fee system will be dropped for customers who book online, while travellers who arrive at the ferry terminal without booking will pay more.

BC Ferries is currently undergoing an efficiency plan to cut $54 million in costs in an effort to keep fare increases in check.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Binning House

Historic home going back to estate

A storied home and National Historic site in West Vancouver has been ordered by B.C.'s top court to be transferred back to the estate of its original owners.

Binning House, built in 1941 for renowned Canadian artist Bertram Binning and his wife Jessie, was known as an example of early West Coast modern architecture and was designated a National Historic Site by Parks Canada in 1998.

After the couple's deaths, the estate's trustees couldn't maintain the home and gave it to the Land Conservancy of B.C., but Jessie Binning's will prohibited a direct transfer so a new intermediary was created.

A court document show the trustees transferred the property in October 2008 to the new society, which immediately transferred it to the land conservancy.

The document says the land conservancy entered creditor protection in early October 2013, just weeks before a $1.6-million unsolicited purchase offer was made on the home.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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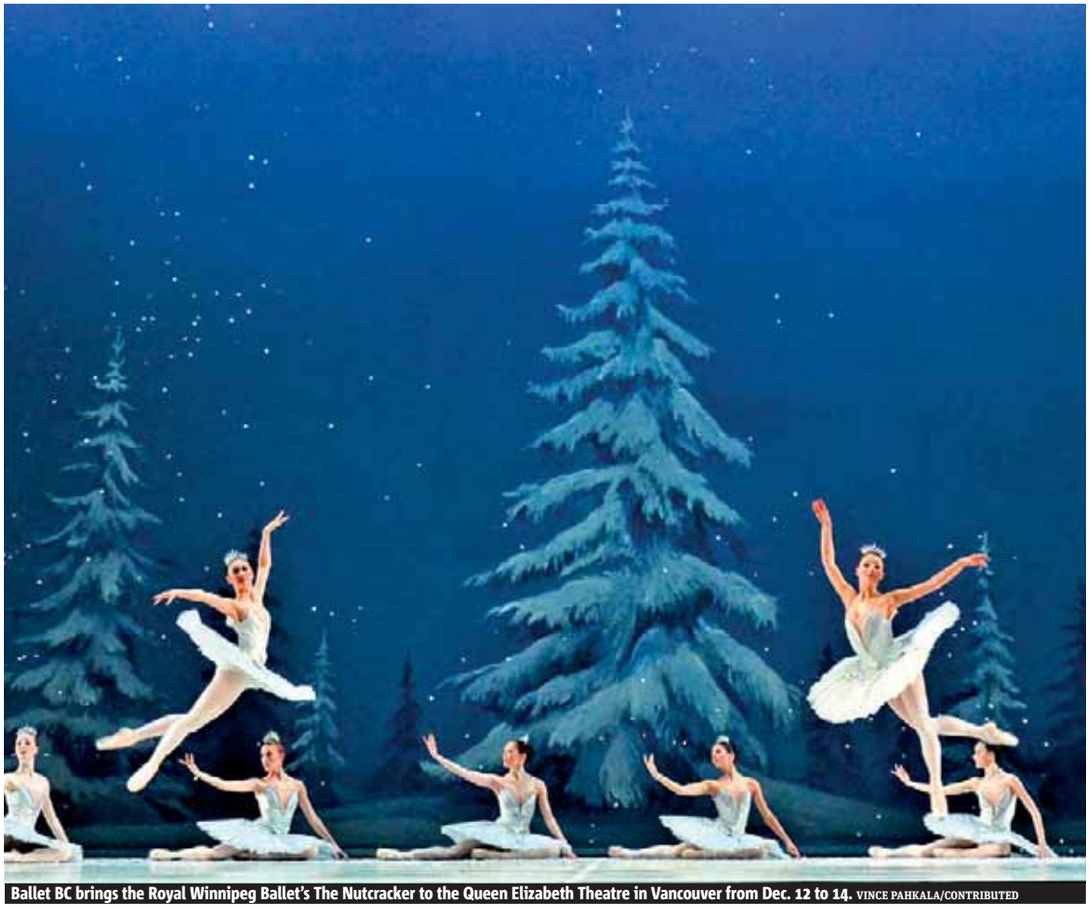

Ballet BC brings the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's The Nutcracker to the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver from Dec. 12 to 14. VINCE PAHKALA/CONTRIBUTED

Checking it twice: A list of holiday fun

Spreading good cheer. Check out these four pine-needle-scented, snowy events designed to fill you like a stocking with Christmas cheer

BACKSTAGE PASS
Graeme McRanor
vancouver@metronews.ca

Two things happened this week: It got really, really cold and I started hearing and seeing Christmas-related advertising on radio and television.

As a result, I won't be listening to the radio or watching television until January.

In the meantime, life forces me outside. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. After all, there's no shortage of holiday-themed arts events going on in the city. And guess what? They're only trying to sell us one thing: A good time.

Here is my annual, not-so-exhaustive, pine-needle-scented list of things to do over this holiday season.

The Nutcracker: I once got an actual nutcracker in my stocking. Alas, it was too physically demanding. What never gets tired though is the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's version, which features plenty of dancers doing physically demanding things. Ballet BC presents this fantastic traditional piece of classical ballet from Dec. 12 to 14 at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. Tickets range from $35 to $98.50. More information at BalletBC.com.

A Twisted Christmas Carol: Everybody likes to get twisted over the holidays. Now, at the Arts Club, you can do it without horrifying your family. It's being presented as the holiday anti-classic — a giggle-filled, improvisational spin on the Dickens holiday classic using suggestions from the audience. What could go wrong? It's at the Revue Stage (for the first time since 2005!) through Dec. 27. Tickets start at $29. More information at ArtsClub.com.

James and the Giant Peach: Maybe not a holiday classic, but certainly a timeless one. And hey, it's about friendship, family and home, so we'll let it slide. Carousel Theatre for Young People presents this new musical production of Roald Dahl's classic from Dec. 6 until Jan. 4 at the Waterfront Theatre on Granville Island. Tickets are $35 (adult), $29 (seniors/college students) or $18 (youth, ages 6-17). More information can be found at CarouselTheatre.ca.

It's a Wonderful Life Radio Play: Why listen to the radio at home when you can go to a theatre and listen to the radio? Or something. Pacific Theatre presents this piece by Peter Church, which combines the classic 1940s story with a live radio broadcast from that same era. A radio studio with live sound effects, actors who shift seamlessly between characters, songs, old-timey radio commercials and jingles? What a trip. Starts tomorrow at Pacific Theatre and runs until Dec. 30. More information at PacificTheatre.org.

Bright Nights Stanley Park Christmas Train: Bundle up the shrimps and climb aboard the choo-choo of cheer. They've got, like, three million lights goin' on down there, you know. Tickets range from $8 (kids 3-17; seniors) to $11 (adults). Kids two and under are free.

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NDP. Mulcair endorses stricter rules for firearms

A New Democrat government would ensure police are able to track every firearm in Canada, but would also seek to avoid the pitfalls that made the now-defunct long-gun registry so controversial, Tom Mulcair said Wednesday.

The NDP leader disputed the Conservative government's contention that gun registration is an unfair, onerous requirement for law-abiding gun owners.

NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair
THE CANADIAN PRESS

"I have nothing against seeing honest farmers and duck hunters be able to have their weapons," Mulcair said outside an NDP caucus meeting. "But, you know, that honest hunter who goes out with his pickup truck, it's a registered pickup truck … the trailer's registered and the 4X4 is registered. Heck, his dog is registered."

New Democrats "have confidence in the ability of farmers and duck hunters to fill out a form," he added. While farmers and hunters are entitled to own firearms, Mulcair suggested there must be strict limits.

"What kind of duck do you hunt with an assault weapon? A pterodactyl?"

There's no reason a system of tracking firearms has to go "overboard," as the Liberals did when they created the long-gun registry and imposed criminal penalties for failure to register, Mulcair said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Jean Béliveau was a 'role model to us all'

Serge Laflamme lights a candle at a statue of Jean Béliveau on Wednesday in Longueuil, Que. The Montreal Canadiens hockey legend passed away Tuesday at the age of 83. On his death, he was remembered as a "legend" and a "role model to us all." Tributes poured in from the hockey world and from political leaders after the Canadiens announced that perhaps their best player ever, and certainly their greatest captain, had died. "He was a hero to generations of his fellow French Canadians and hockey fans everywhere. Our sport has lost a great ambassador," said Canadiens owner and president Geoff Molson.

PHOTO: RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS
TEXT: THE CANADIAN PRESS

For more coverage, see page 49

Analysis. Veterans Affairs underspent on war graves

Veterans Affairs spent millions less than it budgeted for maintaining war graves last year in cemeteries like those in Italy visited recently by Julian Fantino, a report reveals.

The departmental performance review of the memorial and cemetery maintenance program shows just 2,500 of 7,000 grave markers were properly maintained last year.

The government earmarked more than $18.5 million in fiscal 2013-14 to help preserve the memory of Canadians who died serving their country, the programs analysis report shows.

Instead, the department spent $2.6 million less, or just over $15.9 million, with just eight people doing the preservation work — far short of the 41 full-time employees originally projected for the program.

The analysis also says foreign service-providers completed maintenance work on only 80 per cent of Canada's overseas memorials, short of their 85 per cent target.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Class action

A federal government lawyer is asking B.C.'s highest court to throw out a class-action lawsuit by Canadian Forces members injured in Afghanistan who say they've been stripped of benefits.

Prostitution law comes on anniversary of massacre

Dec. 6. Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre is also a nationwide day of action on violence against women

It's "sick and twisted" that Canada's controversial new prostitution bill comes into force on a day dedicated to eradicating violence against women, says one of the women behind a successful court challenge of the old laws.

The new legislation, known as the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act, comes into force on Saturday, Dec. 6, which is also the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

The day — the anniversary of the shooting deaths of 14 women at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal at the hands of gunman Marc Lepine — has evolved into an occasion to commemorate all female victims of violence.

Those who work in the sex industry have expressed their disdain for the new prostitution laws, which they fear will result in more victims, not fewer.

"I think that it's a really sick and twisted day for it to happen," said Valerie Scott, one of three women behind the landmark Supreme Court case that declared Canada's legislation on prostitution unconstitutional.

"That day should not solely be for women who were murdered by Marc Lepine, it should also be for women who were murdered by Robert Pickton," said Scott.

Sensitivity issue?

"I'm sure if they had thought about it, they might have picked another date, if they were a bit sensitive."

NDP justice critic Francoise Boivin

Pickton, a B.C. pig farmer, was convicted almost exactly seven years ago for the gruesome murders of six prostitutes, and had been charged in the deaths of 20 others.

The case was among those referenced by the Supreme Court last year when it struck down Canada's prostitution laws, arguing that they deprived sex workers of the ability to work safely.

The decision gave the government one year to establish new laws. The new bill was introduced June 4, reviewed by both the House of Commons and Senate and granted royal assent on Nov. 6.

By the bill's own terms, it was slated to come into effect 30 days after that — which is how Dec. 6 came to be the date.

"We do not control the passage of bills in the Senate, nor when a bill receives royal assent," said Clarissa Lamb, a spokeswoman for Justice Minister Peter MacKay.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quebecor Inc.

University may study Peladeau's media ownership

The centre for media studies at Universite Laval is expected to decide next week if it will study whether Pierre Karl Peladeau should continue owning the controlling shares in Quebecor Inc.

The Liberal government has tabled a motion asking the university to look into the effects on democracy of a politician who controls a media empire.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada Revenue Agency

Heartbleed hacker facing more charges

The RCMP have laid 16 more charges against a London, Ont., man originally charged last April in connection with the Heartbleed computer bug and the loss of data from the Canada Revenue Agency website.

Stephen Arthuro Solis-Reyes had been charged only with unauthorized use of a computer and mischief in relation to data, in the revenue agency case.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Top Mountie testifies in harassment case

A longtime Mountie suing the RCMP for harassment was seen as "almost unequivocally embittered towards the force" while his superiors were regarded as "blameless" despite the man's repeated allegations against them, RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson testified in a Newmarket, Ont., court on Wednesday.

The head of the force was subpoenaed to testify at the civil trial of Sgt. Peter Merrifield, who alleges in his lawsuit that he was harassed by some of his superiors within the RCMP and that they employed aggressive and intimidating means to try to silence him.

He was questioned at length on what he was told about Merrifield, with Merrifield's lawyer suggesting the commissioner got incomplete information on the officer, which led to further damage to his reputation as recently as last year.

Court also heard that Merrifield had written to Paulson raising the issue of a superior's possible involvement with prostitutes.

When Merrifield's lawyer asked if an investigation was conducted into the matter, Paulson said "no."

"The view was that those officers had tried to respond to the circumstances as best as they could in the moment and that there was no sort of malfeasance," Paulson said.

Merrifield had told a Senate committee last year that a senior RCMP officer "was observed by their vice unit speaking to an undercover female officer posing as a prostitute in a john sting."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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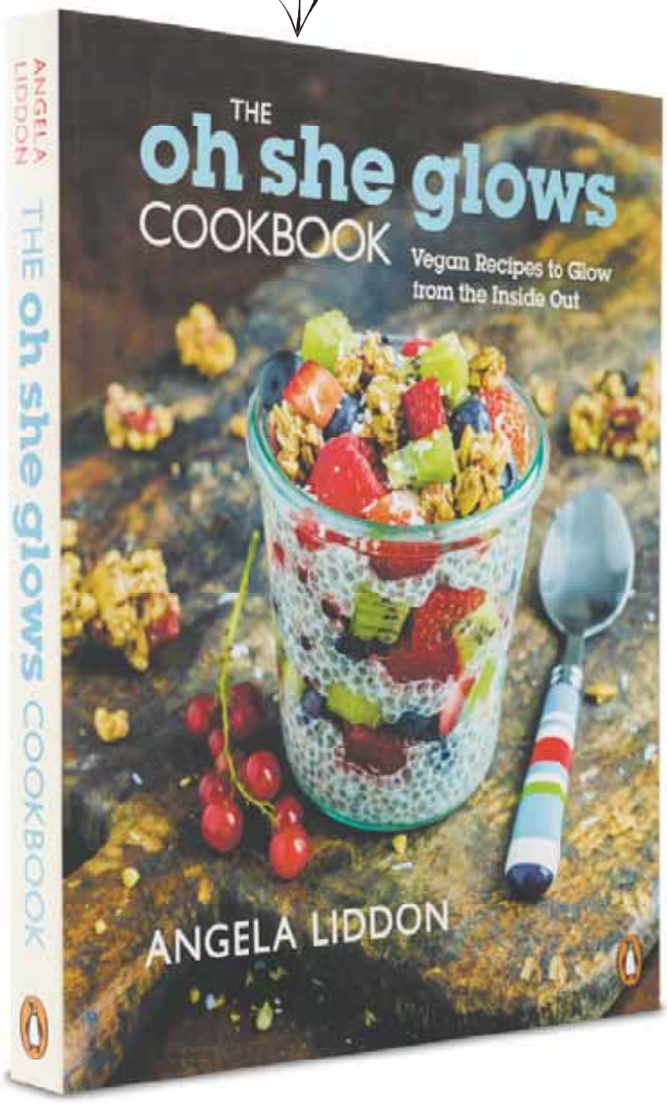
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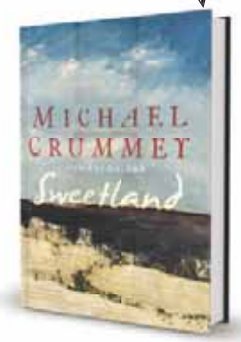

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AMMI Canada to object to Lyme bill

An organization representing Canada's infectious-diseases specialists plans to raise objections to a private member's bill on Lyme disease at a Senate committee hearing.

Their concern: the bill's preamble appears to support the notion that significant numbers of people in Canada are suffering from a condition they believe to be chronic Lyme disease and that these individuals are being failed by a medical system that refuses to accept that diagnosis, leaving sick people to suffer.

The organization, the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (AMMI) Canada, is hoping to persuade the committee to strip three paragraphs from the preamble to the bill, saying it can support the rest of the document.

But Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, who proposed the bill, says that isn't possible at this stage.

May, an MP for the British Columbia riding of Saanich-Gulf Islands, says the preamble cannot be altered without sending the bill back to the House of Commons. And that, she says, would effectively kill the bill; there would not be enough time for it to make its way back through Parliament before next fall's election.

The fear held by infectious-disease specialists is that in criticizing the existing guidelines developed over several years to diagnose Lyme disease, the bill tacitly supports an alternative method that an independent review — commissioned by Britain's Health Protection Agency — found to not provide a sound, empirical approach to Lyme disease diagnosis and care.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Jeopardy champions Ken Jennings, left, and Brad Rutter, right, look on as the IBM computer called Watson beats them during a practice round.

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Students test out Watson

Need legal advice? University of Toronto students designed electronic paralegal program using IBM's Jeopardy-winning A.I.

LUKE SIMCOE
luke.simcoe@metronews.ca

Need a shoulder to cry on during your divorce? Or, how about some advice for you next legal battle? Never fear, Watson is here.

Students at the University of Toronto are putting the famous Jeopardy-playing super-computer to work.

Last spring, IBM partnered with 10 schools, challenging them to put an entrepreneurial spin on Watson's artificial intelligence. U of T was the only Canadian institution invited, and students were tasked with pitching a business model combining Watson with legal data.

"There's a ton of money to be made in law. It's all about helping lawyers reduce their research time," said computer science professor Paul Gries.

Ideas included Divorcesay, an online app that guides you through the legal process of getting a divorce, as well as Loom, which mines court data to determine the likelihood your case will succeed. The program predicted, for example, that a current legal bid to force the Canadian Hockey League to pay players a minimum wage has a 68 per cent chance of success.

The winning team, announced Wednesday, pitched a product called Ross, an "electronic paralegal" aimed at assisting lawyers with case research. In January, the team will fly to New York to compete against nine other schools for a chance to win $100,000 in seed capital.

"This is just the first step," said Jimoh Ovbiagale, a U of T student and member of the team headed stateside. "Our ultimate goal is to build a great Canadian company."

At its core, Watson is a computer program that can make sense of natural language. It can ingest large amounts of text, process it and use it to answer questions. During its run on Jeopardy, for example, it read the entirety of Wikipedia and used that data to correctly answer clues.

"From an artificial intelligence point of view, it's almost impossible. Only IBM, with millions of dollars in investment, could make something like Watson," said Steve Engels, a U of T professor and one of the event's organizers.

Quoted

"When we first got Watson, it was like a baby. We had to feed it and train it ... and then over the course of the year, it became an adult."

Amy Jie Jin Sha, a member of the Divorcesay team

Sven Dickinson, chair of the university's computer science department, said the Watson Challenge taught students valuable business skills that will serve them well even if they don't go on to launch start-ups.

"The fact is that our students are likely to be recruited by start-ups. It's going to be important for them to be able to evaluate the offer in front of them when they are," said Tim Capes, one of the business mentors brought on board for the program.

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Rescue effort underway for trapped loon

Residents in West Quebec are trying to save a loon trapped on a partially frozen lake.

The bird can be seen gliding back and forth on a small unfrozen portion of Pike Lake in Edelweiss, about 30 kilometres north of Ottawa. Locals believe the bird is stranded, since loons typically fly south for the winter by now.

Tanya Dare, who lives on the lake, said people are working to rescue the animal.

"We have some leads on boats and people who know about loons," she wrote in an email. "It's wonderful how the community has rallied around this poor bird."

Mae Goguen of the Wild Bird Care Centre said the non-profit organization will care for the loon, but lacks the equipment or staff to rescue the animal. She speculates the loon is too thin or injured to fly away, though that won't make rescue efforts any easier.

Quoted

"It's wonderful how the community has rallied around this poor bird."

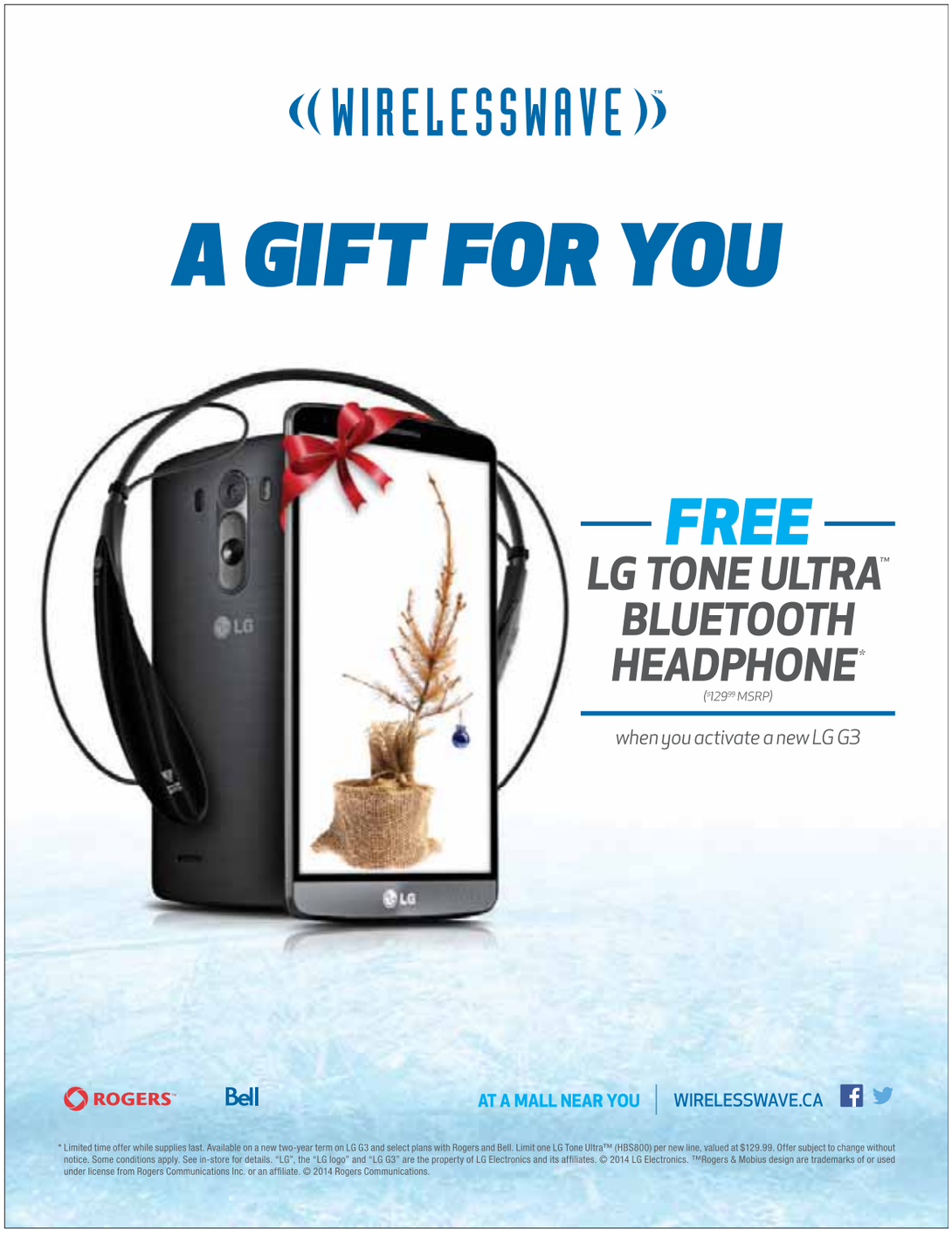
Tanya Dare, who lives near Pike Lake

"Every time you approach him, he's just going to swim under and disappear," she said.

University of Ottawa biology professor Adam Oliver Brown said loons need more than a small pool of water to fly.

"Being diving birds, their body configuration is such that their feet are very far back towards the back of their body … so they need to run along long stretches of water before they can take flight," he said.

LUCY SCHOLEY/METRO IN OTTAWA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Brier Stewart and therapy dog Luka do tricks for Dalhousie University students as part of the Puppy Room at the Sexton Campus in Halifax on Wednesday.

JEFF HARPER/METRO IN HALIFAX

Furry friends lessen stress

Dalhousie University. Students delight in a chance to cuddle away pre-exam anxiety in the annual 'Puppy Room'

HALEY RYAN
Metro in Halifax

More than a dozen Dalhousie University students in huddled in smiling groups around red-vested therapy dogs on Wednesday, running their hands through soft fur or watching the pups perform tricks with their owners.

The Halifax school's annual Puppy Room opened for two days at the Studley campus this week, and expanded to the Sexton Campus on Barrington Street for the first time on Wednesday to bring some warm fuzzies to stressed-out students.

"It's just filled us full of love. Forget about math, forget about exams, it's a time to play with dogs," Shalki Shukla, an international student from India, said with a smile.

Shukla said she had been missing her own dog and looking forward to the event — which ran into a bit of her class time but Shukla said she couldn't pass up the opportunity because "dogs are the best."

"Being an international student always felt very lonely, but coming here it's like 'Oh my God, I got my family back,'" said internetworking student Monica Sheeba, also from India.

Two golden retrievers and a Bernese mountain dog, St. Bernard and Labradoodle soaked up the attention for the afternoon, and master's student Joel Scott said although he's not a "dog person per se" it's nice to be around calm and relaxing animals.

"Cats are pretty indifferent to anything," he said with a smile.

Courtroom helper

As two child witnesses take the stand in a Calgary courtroom this week, they will be comforted by a special four-legged support worker.

- Hawk, the first-ever therapy dog to sit inside an Alberta courtroom, was there to comfort as a seven-year-old girl took the stand Tuesday. The girl is testifying against her father, who has been accused of sexually abusing her. Her nine-year-old brother will also eventually testify, with the black Labrador retriever by his side as well.

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Hundreds mourn woman who aided girls

Germany. Woman came to rescue of girls being harassed by men, was left comatose after fight, pulled from life support

Hundreds of mourners paid their last respects Wednesday to a young woman hailed as a hero, who suffered fatal injuries after intervening to help two teenage girls being harassed by a group of men.

Tugce Albayrak had been in a coma since mid-November following an early-morning altercation in Offenbach, near Frankfurt. She died Friday, her 23rd birthday, after her family gave permission to switch off her life support.

Albayrak's funeral was held outside a mosque in Waechtersbach in central Germany. Her coffin, covered by a green cloth with Arabic script in gold, was placed on a stone table, flanked by German and Turkish flags. Turkey's ambassador to Germany and the Hesse state governor also attended the ceremony, conducted in both Turkish and German.

The bravery of the Turkish-German woman triggered an outpouring of public sympathy in Germany.

Albayrak and two friends came to the aid of two teenage girls who were being harassed by several young men inside a bathroom in a McDonald's at about 4 a.m. on Nov. 15. Later outside, one of the men allegedly hit Albayrak in the head, and she fell to the ground.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The coffin with Tugce Albayrak rests outside a mosque during a funeral ceremony in Waechtersbach, Germany, on Wednesday. Tugce, comatose since mid-November following an altercation at a restaurant, was taken off life support Friday — her 23rd birthday. MICHAEL PROBST/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Climate change

2014 tied for hottest year: UN

Temperature data shows 2014 is currently tied for the hottest year on record, the UN weather agency said Wednesday.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said the global average temperature in January-October was 0.57 C above average, the same as in 2010.

The ocean temperature set a new record in the nine-month period, while land temperatures were the fourth or fifth highest since record-keeping began in the 19th century, the WMO said in a UN report.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sexual abuse

The truth must prevail: Pope

Pope Francis assured Dominican authorities on Wednesday that the truth must prevail in the case of his former ambassador to the Caribbean country who is accused of sexually abusing young boys. Francis met with the Dominican Republic's top prosecutor, Francisco Dominguez Brito, after his Wednesday general audience. Wesolowski has been defrocked and placed under modified house arrest inside Vatican City pending a decision by the Vatican criminal court on whether to indict him.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Airstrikes. Iran believed to have struck at ISIL: U.S.

Iranian jets have carried out airstrikes in Iraq against militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in recent days, U.S. officials and independent analysts say, underscoring the strange alliances generated by the war against the extremist group that has beheaded Americans and blown up rivals' holy sites.

Washington and Tehran are locked in tough negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. But at the same time, the two adversaries have been fighting parallel campaigns on the same side in Iraq to defend the Shiite-dominated government — and the region's Kurds — from ISIL militants who have seized large sections of Iraq and Syria.

It has long been known that Iranian troops and advisers have been fighting alongside Iraqi forces against ISIL, but until this week there had been no confirmation of Iranian air activity. The timing and nature of the strikes are not clear, but U.S. officials say some involved American-made F-4 Phantoms, twin-engine fighter bombers that were sold to Iran's U.S.-backed shah in the 1970s and were last produced by McDonnell Aircraft Corp. in 1981.

Qatari-based broadcaster Al-Jazeera filmed a jet flying over Iraq on Nov. 30 that was identified by Jane's Defence Weekly as an Iranian Phantom.

Speaking in Brussels on Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said Iranian attacks on ISIL militants would represent a positive development.

"I think it's self-evident that if Iran is taking on ISIL in some particular place, and it's confined to taking on ISIL, and it has an impact, its net effect is positive," Kerry told reporters. "But that's not something we're co-ordinating."

In Iran, a spokeswoman for the foreign ministry, Marzieh Afkham, also denied that Iran has co-operated with the U.S.-led coalition but neither confirmed nor denied the Iranian airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq.

Iraq's Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, told reporters Wednesday, "I'm not aware there were Iranian airstrikes."

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fortwo pure cabriolet	2013	Z1301068	$21,160.00	$15,160.00
fortwo passion cabriolet	2013	Z1300316	$22,760.00	$16,160.00
fortwo passion cabriolet	2013	N1300319	$22,760.00	$16,160.00
fortwo passion cabriolet	2013	Z1301211	$23,580.00	$17,160.00

Demonstrator Model	Year	Stock #	Original Total Price	Clearance Price
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fortwo passion cabriolet	2013	Z1301176	$23,185.00	$17,160.00
fortwo passion cabriolet	2013	N1300510	$25,150.00	$19,160.00
fortwo BRABUS coupe	2015	R1561994	$25,090.00	$21,160.00
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fortwo electric drive coupe	2014	B1460625	$29,645.00	SOLD
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City of Bhopal remains haunted by world's worst industrial disaster

India. Thirty years after factory gas leak claimed 15,000 lives, survivors demand punishment, more compensation

Various organizations representing victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy burn a banner representing Dow Chemical Co. on Wednesday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hundreds of Bhopal's citizens took to the streets Wednesday, chanting slogans and carrying placards demanding harsher punishments for those responsible for the Bhopal gas tragedy.

On the morning of Dec. 3, 1984, a pesticide plant run by Union Carbide leaked about 40 tons of deadly methyl isocyanate gas into the air in Bhopal, quickly killing about 4,000 people. Lingering effects of the poison pushed the death toll to about 15,000 over the next few years, according to government estimates.

In all, at least 500,000 people were affected, according to the Indian government. Thirty years later, activists say thousands of children are still being born with brain damage, missing palates and twisted limbs because of their parents' exposure to the gas or water contaminated by it. Cancer rates in the city are inordinately high.

"I still feel the pain even today. I still see those images," said Mohammed Ismail, a 57-year-old rickshaw driver whose daughter lost vision in both of her eyes after the gas leak. "On every gas anniversary, I feel it would have been better for me to die that night."

In the poor neighbourhoods behind the Union Carbide plant, where the worst of the tragedy unfolded, survivors and their relatives and supporters burned effigies of Warren Anderson, who headed Union Carbide Corp. at the time of the leak, and a banner with the logo of Dow Chemical Co., which bought Union Carbide.

Anderson died in September in a nursing home in Florida. Just after the disaster, Anderson travelled to India, where he was arrested. He left the country while free on bail and never returned.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cause and response

American chemical company Union Carbide Corp. has said that the accident — which took place when water entered the sealed tank containing the highly reactive methyl isocyanate — was an act of sabotage by a disgruntled employee, never identified, and not lax safety standards or faulty plant design, as claimed by activists.

- Union Carbide was bought by Dow Chemical Co. in 2001. Dow says the legal case was resolved in 1989, when Union Carbide settled with the Indian government for $470 million.

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Brown case. Stepfather apologizes for comments

The stepfather of Michael Brown has apologized for angry comments he made after the grand jury decided not to indict the police officer who killed his unarmed 18-year-old stepson, but said his remarks had nothing to do with the arson and looting that ravaged Ferguson and the surrounding area.

Police said Tuesday they are investigating Louis Head's comments as part of a broader inquiry into the arson, vandalism and looting that followed the announcement of the grand jury decision on Nov. 24. Brown's death inflamed racial tensions in the Missouri city of Ferguson and fuelled a debate over relations between law enforcement and black communities across the country.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Egypt. Gov't to criminalize insulting the uprisings

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi has said his office is drafting a law to criminalize insulting the uprisings that toppled President Hosni Mubarak in 2011 and his Islamist successor Mohammed Morsi last year.

The move intends to ease concerns on both sides of a widening rift over whether the two popular movements expressed the genuine will of Egyptians.

The dispute was further stoked by a judge's dismissal last weekend of a murder case against Mubarak over the killing of protesters.

Just what would constitute an insult however was unclear, as was the time frame for the legislation's implementation. Such a law, however, would infringe on the freedom of expression guaranteed by the nation's new constitution.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Two more women accuse Bill Cosby of sex abuse

Attorney Gloria Allred, left, speaks at a press conference with Chelan, right, an alleged victim of Bill Cosby, on Wednesday in Los Angeles, Calif. Cosby has been accused of sexual assault by approximately 20 women.

FREDERICK M. BROWN/GETTY IMAGES

Press conference.
The pair have never spoken about their experiences: Attorney

Three women who claim they were victimized by Bill Cosby appeared at a Wednesday afternoon news conference called by attorney Gloria Allred.

Allred wrote in a news release that she will propose a way the women can "obtain justice" despite statutes of limitations that would prevent criminal or civil cases from being filed.

Two of the women have never spoken about their experiences with Cosby, Allred wrote. The third woman was prepared to testify against Cosby to support another woman's 2005 lawsuit claiming sexual assault by Cosby in Pennsylvania. Cosby settled that lawsuit before it went to trial.

The press conference comes a day after a sexual battery lawsuit was filed by Judy Huth, a Southern California woman who claims the comedian molested her in a bedroom of the Playboy Mansion around 1974 when she was 15 years old.

Huth's lawsuit states she became aware of the psychological damage of the incident recently. Under California law, adult victims who suffered childhood sexual abuse can file lawsuits within three years of when they discover the abuse caused significant psychological trauma.

In recent weeks, more than a dozen women have accused Cosby of drugging and sexually abusing them. Cosby's lawyer, Marty Singer, did not respond to requests for comment on Wednesday, though Cosby's lawyers previously have issued statements characterizing some of the claims as previously discredited and others as untrue. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Sierra Leone

Doctor gets Ebola

Another Sierra Leonean doctor has become infected with Ebola, as the UN health agency said Wednesday that poor data from the outbreak is complicating efforts to measure progress in containing the disease.

Ebola has sickened more than 17,000 people, the majority of those in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Venezuela

Gov't to charge opposition figure

A leading opposition figure learned Wednesday she is being charged with involvement in an alleged plot to kill President Nicolas Maduro, a move she called an attempt to silence her and other critics of Venezuela's socialist government. Authorities informed Maria Corina Machado that she would be charged with conspiracy. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Led by Texas

17-state coalition to sue feds over immigration

Texas is leading a 17-state coalition in suing over the Obama administration's recently announced executive actions on immigration.

Many top Republicans have denounced President Barack Obama's unilateral move designed to spare as many as five million people living illegally in the United States from deportation. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Street rallies

Hungary protests bolstered by U.S.

Buoyed by pressure from the United States, throngs of ordinary Hungarians are fighting back against Prime Minister Viktor Orban's drive to consolidate power through a perceived crackdown on civil liberties. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NYC. No indictment for officer in chokehold death

A grand jury cleared a white New York City police officer Wednesday in the video-taped chokehold death of an unarmed black man who had been stopped on suspicion of selling loose, untaxed cigarettes, a lawyer for the victim's family said.

The decision not to indict officer Daniel Pantaleo threatened to add to the tensions that have simmered in the city since the July 17 death of Eric Garner — a case that sparked outrage and drew comparisons to the fatal police shooting of 18-year-old Michael Brown in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Mo.

The Garner case also sparked protests, accusations of racist policing and calls for federal prosecutors to intervene.

Jonathan Moore, an attorney for Garner's family, said he was told of the grand jury's decision. Two law enforcement officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly on the case, confirmed the officer was not indicted.

"I am actually astonished based on the evidence of the video tape, and the medical examiner, that this grand jury at this time wouldn't indict for anything," Moore said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tamir Rice

The uncle of a 12-year-old boy who had a pellet gun when he was shot by a Cleveland police officer told mourners at a memorial service Wednesday that they must be advocates for change through peaceful protest and civil disobedience.

- Tamir Rice's uncle also said that police need to revamp how they train officers while also looking closer at police brutality and the use of excessive force.

Rome. Dig for subway finds ancient commercial farm

Archaeologists have unearthed an ancient commercial farm in the heart of modern Rome, taking advantage of subway construction to explore deeply in urban settings.

They worked some 20 metres down (six storeys deep) near St. John in Lateran Basilica. Today's Rome rests upon medieval layers and, under those, more ancient strata of life.

Rossella Rea, the dig's leader and a culture ministry official, said Wednesday that archaeologists discovered a first-century agricultural business, the closest to Rome's ancient centre ever found, an irrigation basin measuring 35 by 70 metres, and an extensive drainage system near the ancient Aqua Crabra water source.

Notable finds included a three-pronged iron pitchfork, storage baskets, leather fragments possibly from a farmhand's glove or shoe, and traces carved into stone by a waterwheel's repeated turning. Also extraordinary are well-preserved vestiges of willow and other tree roots and stumps. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

This undated photo provided by the Cooperativa Archeologia shows lined-up amphoras that were discovered during a subway construction in Rome.
COOPERATIVA ARCHEOLOGIA, HO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Mamma mia: New Mona Lisa theory

Leonardo da Vinci. Italian historian speculates renowned face could be artist's mother, who may have been a Chinese slave

The Portrait of Mona Lisa, painted by Leonardo da Vinci, is seen in Paris's Louvre Museum. An historian suggests da Vinci's mother, whom he says might have been a slave from China, inspired the painting.
JEAN-PIERRE MULLER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

An Italian historian's theory that Mona Lisa might be a Chinese slave and Leonardo da Vinci's mother — making the 15th-century polymath half-Chinese — sent online commentators into a frenzy Wednesday.

Angelo Paratico, a Hong Kong-based historian and novelist from Italy, told the South China Morning Post: "On the back of Mona Lisa, there is a Chinese landscape and even her face looks Chinese."

Chinese web users expressed astonishment and disbelief Wednesday, posting dozens of parodies of the painting.

Little is known about Caterina, the mother of the artist, writer, mathematician and inventor, and the identity of the sitter for the portrait hanging in Paris's Louvre museum has long been a matter of debate.

Paratico, who is finishing a book entitled Leonardo da Vinci: A Chinese Scholar Lost in Renaissance Italy, cited Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud's 1910 assumption that the painting was inspired by the artist's mother.

"One wealthy client of Leonardo's father had a slave called Caterina. After 1452, Leonardo's date of birth, she disappeared from the documents," he told the paper.

Many posters on China's Twitter-like Sina Weibo were incredulous.

"I'm so sad that you thought I'm a foreigner!" wrote one, with an image of a frowning Mona Lisa holding two rolls of toilet paper and blowing her nose.

"I'd rather be from wherever I am loved."

Another user replaced her features with unlikely faces ranging from Chinese male comedian Zhao Benshan to British actor Rowan Atkinson, to a grimacing robot holding a Mona Lisa mask.

The topic had been viewed more than four million times and triggered 160,000 postings by midday Wednesday.

"I now understand why her smile looks so mysterious and concealed — it's typically Chinese," said another poster. AFP

The Mona Lisa

The evidence for a Chinese connection appears to be slight, with Paratico saying he was sure "up to a point" that da Vinci's mother was from the Orient. "To make her an oriental Chinese, we need to use a deductive method," he added.

A.I. Hawking warns that artificial intelligence could end the human race

Physicist Stephen Hawking has warned that the rise of artificial intelligence could see the human race become extinct.

In an interview with the BBC, the scientist said that while "primitive forms" of artificial intelligence have proved useful, if the technology is developed to a level that can surpass humans, it "could spell the end of the human race."

He said that advanced artificial intelligence would "take off on its own, and redesign itself at an ever increasing rate."

Human biological evolution will not be able to compete and "would be superseded," he said in the interview Tuesday.
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Stephen Hawking
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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A long, long road to recovery

A crane removes the rubble of Jamal Abdelnaser UNRWA School, destroyed in the recent conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza City, Gaza Strip. The first large-scale project to remove rubble from the war started Wednesday, a step perceived as notable on the long path of rebuilding tens of thousands of houses damaged by Israeli artillery shells. Sweden is funding $3.6 million of it through UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, where officials hope to crush and clear 140,000 tons of rubble in the area in one year. ADEL HANA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moving story

From Virginia to Hawaii, 36 days in a moving box

Ashley Barth tells WAVY-TV her cat Mee Moowe disappeared in September as movers packed her family's belongings for a move from Suffolk, Va., to Hawaii.

Thirty-six days later, in Hawaii, Barth says she heard a faint "meow": Mee Moowe was in one of the boxes. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Some 40 to 60 jars

Missing brains were destroyed: University of Texas

School officials say dozens of human brains reported missing from a University of Texas lab were actually destroyed 12 years ago.

The university said Wednesday between 40 and 60 jars, some with multiple brains, weren't suitable for research or teaching purposes. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Blast-off. Japan launches asteroid chaser into space

A Japanese space explorer took off Wednesday on a six-year journey to blow a crater in a remote asteroid and bring back rock samples in hopes of gathering clues to the origin of Earth.

The non-tripulated explorer, named Hayabusa2, is expected to reach the asteroid in mid-2018, spend about 18 months studying it and return in late 2020.

A small device will separate from the explorer and shoot a projectile to blast open a crater a few metres in diameter.

The explorer, which will hide behind the asteroid during the blast, will then try to collect material from inside the crater.

Asteroids can provide evidence not available on Earth about the birth of the solar system and its evolution. JAXA, Japan's space agency, said the research could help explain the origin of seawater and how the planet Earth was formed.

Hayabusa2 will attempt to expand on the work of Hayabusa, a previous explorer that returned in 2010 after collecting material from the surface of another asteroid. By reaching inside an asteroid this time, the new explorer may recover material that is not as weathered by the space environment and heat. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

An H2-A rocket takes off carrying space explorer Hayabusa2 in Kagoshima, Japan, Wednesday. KYODO NEWS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Bell takes on Netflix

CraveTV. Bell is offering a new streaming service for about half the price of rivals Netflix and Shomi

Bell's streaming competitor to Netflix and Shomi will launch to "TV lovers" next week at about half the price.

But it requires a TV subscription with Bell, Eastlink or Telus Optik TV and isn't available to cord cutters.

CraveTV will become available on Dec. 11 for $4 a month, with access to more than 300 titles, including The Big Bang Theory, Corner Gas, Curb Your Enthusiasm, Entourage, Homeland, Orphan Black, Seinfeld, Sex and the City, The Sopranos and The Wire.

The content will be available through the TV providers' set-top boxes, at Cravetv.ca and on Apple and Android mobile devices.

Bell Media president Kevin Crull said the company isn't contractually blocked from offering CraveTV to so-called cord cutters or cord nevers, who don't pay for a TV subscription.

He didn't rule out offering the streaming service to those consumers down the road but said Bell wanted to focus on the 90 per cent of Canadians who do have TV subscriptions.

"The 10 per cent that aren't TV subscribers, in a general sense, they're not TV lovers," Crull said in an interview.

"We've worked hard to keep all of our options for the future open. I will tell you this industry is fast moving. But right now we think this is the smart way to make the product available."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Top court hears pregnancy discrimination case

Peggy Young, a Virginia woman who lost her UPS job because she became pregnant, leaves the U.S. Supreme Court after the court heard arguments in her case Dec. 3 in Washington, D.C. The Supreme Court is weighing how much employers must do to accommodate pregnant workers under a federal law aimed at combatting discrimination against them. UPS refused to give Young temporary light-duty work so she could avoid lifting heavy packages after she became pregnant in 2006. WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

Giving processing time

IBM finds way to help fight Ebola

IBM has engineered a way for everyone to join the fight against Ebola — by donating processing time on their personal computers, phones or tablets to researchers.

IBM has teamed with scientists at Scripps Research Institute in southern California on a project that aims to combine the power of thousands of small computers, each attacking tiny pieces of a larger medical puzzle that might otherwise require a supercomputer to solve.

"This could let us do in months what it would otherwise take years and years to do," said Erica Ollmann Saphire, a biomedical researcher at Scripps.

The idea isn't new: Several universities and research institutes have used so-called distributed computing to tackle complex problems.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

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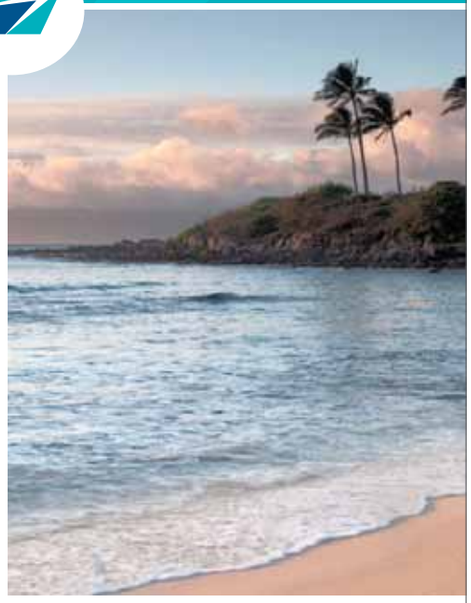

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VOICES

HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

Do people have a constitutional right to adequate housing? The Court of Appeal for Ontario recently ruled that this is a matter for governments to decide, not courts, but advocates plan to take their fight to the Supreme Court of Canada. Metro staff from across the country talked to housing-rights champions for their take:

GETTY IMAGES FILE

The distinction the judge in this case made between the role of the courts and the role of the legislature is an important one, says Stacy Douglas, assistant professor of Law and Legal Studies at Carleton University.

"It rests on an idea, central to our democracy, that parliament makes law, and courts merely ensure that this law is being upheld," she said. "However, this is an increasingly grey area as our law continues to change and transform to accommodate demands, for example, for socio-economic rights.

"The appellants in this case are claiming that the overall approach of the government has led to conditions that violate their rights to adequate housing. (But) because there is no constitutional right to housing and because there is no otherwise stated standard for them to use to evaluate governmental policy, the courts claim it must be a matter for the legislature."

As for whether an absence of government action can be considered a violation of constitutional rights, Douglas said "the law is constantly changing, and judges should be very careful about deciding too swiftly what is justiciable and what isn't. Something that is unacceptable today may very well be acceptable tomorrow."

SEAN MCKIBBON/METRO IN OTTAWA

Nova Scotia

Jim Graham,
program co-ordinator,
Affordable Housing
Association of Nova Scotia

Thoughts on the ruling?
I'm not surprised at all.... It's more of a policy issue than a charter issue.

Why should Canada care?
We live in a subarctic climate. If you're not adequately housed in the wintertime, you die. (Also) research demonstrates that ... secure housing is a foundation that you absolutely need if you're going to pursue better health, better education, better quality of life, period.

What unique challenges does your community face?
There's a lack of adequate affordable housing, and the shelter component is reasonably low.

What policy changes would you like to see?
To have the provincial government ... find policies that increase the supply of truly affordable housing, whether that's acquisition, refurbish, whether it's build some more, whether it's deeper rent subsidies.

British Columbia

DJ Larkin,
lawyer,
Pivot Legal Society

Thoughts on the ruling?
Obviously we're disappointed.... When it comes to fundamental rights, like the right to life and security of the person ... that's not a policy decision. It's extremely clear in international law and in Canada's legal obligations that there is some obligation to make sure that people are housed and safe.

Why should Canada care?
We're one of the only rich countries that doesn't have a national housing plan.... This is the most fundamental thing that you must ensure for a healthy society.

What unique challenges does your community face?
Vancouver (has) an increased number of unsheltered, homeless people on our streets. We're also struggling with very, very fast gentrification in our Downtown Eastside ... and people who relied on this neighbourhood as their last stop before homelessness are now being pushed out.

Manitoba

Clark Brownlee,
co-ordinator,
Right to Housing Coalition

Thoughts on the ruling?
It should've been passed ... and they should've been allowed to at least table their documents in support of Canadians who are homeless. I think it was a gutsy thing to take the rights to housing to court.

Why should Canada care?
From a purely economic standpoint, it costs more by far to have a homeless person live on the streets than in housing. It's a humanitarian issue outside of the rights issue.

What policy changes would you like to see?
I would like to see the federal government get back into funding social housing — the way they did for years. They stopped it in the early '90s in order to balance their budget. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation makes millions of dollars of profit every year that just goes into the federal coffers, which needs to go back into making social and affordable housing available to all Canadians. We don't need to have homelessness in this country.

Alberta

Tim Richter,
president & CEO,
Canadian Alliance to
End Homelessness

Thoughts on the ruling?
This is a bump in the long road to achieving housing rights in Canada.

Why should Canada care?
Housing is one of the basic preconditions upon which all other rights are built. People trapped in homelessness are not free — they are wards of largely dysfunctional systems that breed dependence on others for food, shelter, safety. There can be no right to life if your health is compromised by lack of adequate housing.

Interviews compiled by Kristen Lipscombe/Metro in Halifax, Darren Krause/Metro in Calgary and Adriana Mingo/for Metro in Winnipeg.

From refrigerated freebies to parking fundraisers: Initiatives from around the world to help the homeless

Saudi Arabia

Take at your leisure

A man in Saudi Arabia installed a fridge outside his home to allow homeless people to seek food without begging. Good Samaritans are welcome to help stock the fridge.

The Vatican

Shower in the Square

The Vatican is installing public restrooms with showers in St. Peter's Square to cater to homeless men and women. The idea came after the Pope's chief almsgiver met a homeless man who said he could always find food but never a place to wash himself.

France

Gym doubles as dorm

French advocacy group Not Without A Roof provides overnight shelter for homeless families by allowing them to sleep in the gym of their children's school. Eight schools offer shelter to more than 100 students.

Worldwide

Safe place to put your stuff

Several cities around the world, including New York City and Lisbon, provide lockers to their homeless citizens. There are strict rules pertaining to their use, including not using them for shelter.

U.S.A.

Park and donate

Pasadena, Calif., set up 14 orange parking meters around the city that accept cash and credit-card payments that go directly to local organizations that help feed and shelter the homeless.

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Turning the page on family

Interview. Alan Cumming details his difficult childhood in a memoir, and says he's now at ease with missing out on being a dad

When Scottish actor Alan Cumming was 28, he endured an episode he's come to believe was a nervous breakdown — or, as he memorably refers to it in his new memoir, a Nervy B.

He was eight years into a marriage to actress Hilary Lyon and the couple was trying to have a child. As parenthood loomed and Cumming became increasingly swallowed by anxiety, he started to realize he hadn't quite escaped the dark shadow of his own father.

As documented in Not My Father's Son, the Tony Award-winning actor was raised by a mercurial terror who subjected Cumming and his brother, Tom, to a routine of jarring physical violence and withering verbal criticism.

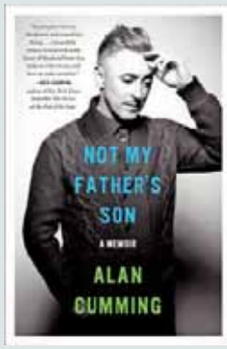
Then 28 years old and considering the reality of fatherhood for the first time, Cumming worried about a cycle of violence. Now 49 and still childless, Cumming says he remains vigilant for echoes of his deceased dad. "I'm not a father, and I've chosen not to be now," he said during an interview in Toronto this week. "Sometimes if I get annoyed with a child, or even my dogs, I sort of think: 'Oh gosh.' I sometimes check myself.

"That will never go away — that worry," he added. "Because I am my father's (son). I have madness on both sides of my family. Let's face it. It's a miracle I'm functioning."

Although Cumming just worked the book's title into conversation casually, it's actually quite a loaded statement for the multi-hyphenate star — one that launched a "crazy summer" that served as the setting for Cumming's memoir.

Alan Cumming's acting resumé is robust. He's pursued an unusually eclectic career onscreen with notable roles in the likes of X-Men 2, GoldenEye, Eyes Wide Shut, the Spy Kids franchise, Romy and Michele's High School Reunion, Circle of Friends, and, recently, The Good Wife, as resourceful and excitable campaign manager Eli Gold. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Daddy dearest?



In one of many chilling memories from his memoir, Cumming writes about his father flying into a rage over his supposedly shaggy hair. His dad dragged him by the scruff of his neck for dozens of yards, threw him across a workbench and shaved his head roughly with a pair of rusty clippers he usually used to shear sheep.

It was 2010, and Cumming was participating in the British genealogy documentary Who Do You Think You Are? As he was preparing to climb his family tree, he fell into contact with his father for the first time in more than a decade.

His dad was dying of cancer and had troubling news for his family: Alan Cumming, he was certain, was not actually his son but instead the product of an extramarital affair pursued by Cumming's beloved mother.

Just as he was reeling from this revelation, Cumming was reaching profound conclusions in his documentary-aided investigation into the mysterious death of his maternal grandfather, a British soldier named Tommy Darling who had disappeared into a life in Malaysia marked in equal measure by honour and havoc. Cumming documents the dual familial probes in sometimes alternating chapters in his tightly focused memoir. And he does eventually find out whether his own father was telling the truth — but it would spoil the book to reveal that answer here.

For a long time the actor was uncharacteristically terse on the topic of his father. In the U.K., where Cumming's life has long been a subject of interest to the tabloid press, it had been established that Cumming and his father were estranged but the reasons why were somewhat blurry.

Even those closest to Cumming were stunned to read his account of a childhood spent weathering a campaign of psychological cruelty and intimidation. "My friends are shocked," said Cumming, nattily clad in a royal blue dress shirt and black vest.

Considerations of parenthood lingered for Cumming, by the way, beyond that anxious time in his 20s.

Now, however — months away from his 50th birthday and years into his marriage to longtime partner Grant Shaffer — Cumming has confidently closed the book on fatherhood.

"I did want to do that, and I really don't now," he said. "I think I got older and I got content. And I don't want to change that. I'm content. So I don't think a child is something that I need to fulfil me anymore."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

SCENE

Author knows food is where the heart is

Cooking up stories. The Hundred-Foot Journey writer Richard Morais says meals are like home for nomads like himself

EVA KIS
Metro in New York City

The Hundred-Foot Journey is out on DVD and On Demand this week. CONTRIBUTED

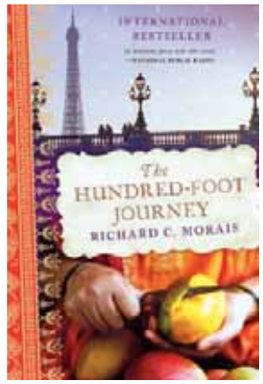
There is a literal trip in The Hundred-Foot Journey, with the clashing French and Indian restaurants separated by exactly 100 feet. In the modern world, most people are making that same journey, though often much farther, for school or jobs or marriage.

For author Richard Morais, the son of an American mother and Portuguese father who grew up in Switzerland, food is something that's become a way to feel at home anywhere.

"People always say, 'You've travelled around the world, where is home?' Well, honestly, I've gotten to the point that home is anywhere I am getting a meal and sharing it with family and friends," he says over dinner at White Street, the recently opened Tribeca restaurant of chef Floyd Cardoz, who created the dishes featured in the novel's film adaptation.

"That's as close to home as I'm ever gonna get, because most of us are nomads, we're a mishmash of cultures, and we're getting more and more mobile."

In the movie, available on DVD and On Demand this week, young Indian chef Hassan Kadam (Manish Dayal) cooks his way into the esteem of Michelin-starred restaurant owner Madame Mallory (Helen Mirren), whose emotional journey is the title's metaphorical meaning. Cooking is Hassan's passion, but also



a way to preserve and share his heritage after his family was driven out of India and made their new home in the south of France.

Cooking food with that kind of significance can be an emotional experience — "When you are homesick, the thing you crave most and first is food," Morais points out. And sometimes, necessity can be the mother of great inventions. One of his favourites: balti spice.

When the first wave of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian immigrants arrived in the English midlands, "they of course were homesick for their flavours, and of course they couldn't get all the spices they had in India in Manchester," Morais says. "So they re-created a spice called balti with what was available in England."

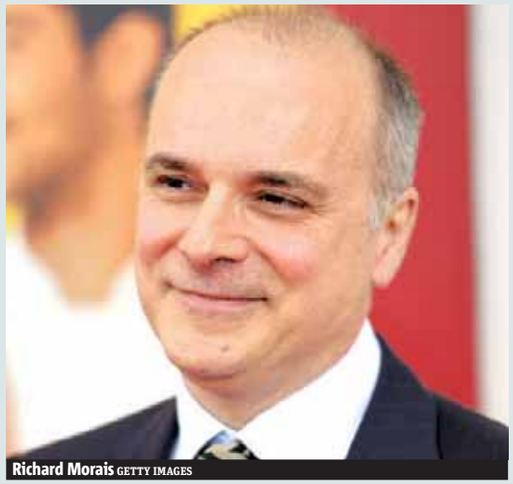
The regional blend inspired its own cuisine, with restaurants known as balti houses serving traditional dishes like vindaloos and stews but made with this new kind of spice. Morais recommends using it on roast pork.

One dish that makes him nostalgic is codfish, which recalls memories of his father's rare but cherished home-cooked meals.

"He's sort of macho, Portuguese background, not very verbally demonstrative, but he adored his children, and how he would (show) it was through the food," Morais recalls.

"One of the things that he would do is each of us, on our birthdays, could pick our meal, and so he would go out and make whatever we asked. So I was torturing the poor man, I would say, 'I want pheasant,' so we would have to go out and get a pheasant and cook a pheasant."

Food at the holiday table



Richard Morais GETTY IMAGES

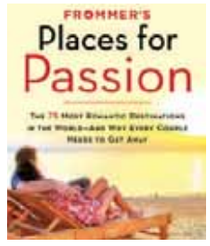
While a holiday gathering can be a great reason for people who may otherwise not see eye-to-eye to set aside their differences, Morais doesn't recommend pushing your luck with the food. "Often it's so stressful and people are so tired," he says. "I think the lower-key meals are the ones where the real magic happens."

Another piece of advice: Leave fusion cuisine to the professionals. Morais still remembers a dish by chef Floyd Cardoz, a barbecue pulled pork-style lamb seasoned with Indian spices. "It was exquisite; it was the perfect fusion. Now, sometimes fusion doesn't work — it tastes like two warring plates — but when it works, it's sublime."

Four books to gift the traveller

In addition to being present-worthy, these books would make a nice addition to your own coffee-table collection — they're useful for trip planning and could serve as inspiration for your travel dreams.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

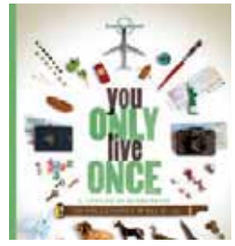


Places for Passion

Places for Passion: The 75 Most Romantic Destinations in the World by Pepper Schwartz and Janet Lever (Frommer's) offers inspiration for couples' getaways from sophisticated cities and exotic destinations to beaches, resorts and outdoor adventures around the world.

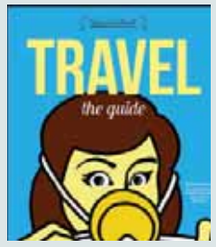
World's Best Cities

World's Best Cities: Celebrating 220 Great Destinations (National Geographic) is a gorgeously illustrated hardcover book that offers an inspiring glance at cities around the world, along with curated lists of best cities in categories such as eco-smart, oceanfront and high-altitude.



You Only Live Once

You Only Live Once: A Lifetime of Experiences for the Explorer in All of Us (Lonely Planet) is a lavishly illustrated hardcover that describes experiences rather than places, from tasting the world's hottest chili peppers to the best birding, safaris, train rides and castles.



Travel: The Guide

Travel: The Guide by Doug Lansky (ebook, hardcover). "This guide won't provide hotel suggestions, give you packing tips, or tell you where to go," Lansky writes. "Instead, this book aspires to hold a mirror up to our travel behaviour."

Author has risked her life to change our views on Iran

Books. Iranian news correspondent says people in her home country care far less about nuclear bombs than they do about personal freedoms

EMILY LAURENCE
Metro in New York City

Nazila Fathi CONTRIBUTED

Serving as the Iranian correspondent for the New York Times — among other publications — has put Nazila Fathi's life in danger many times over the past decade, but she never questioned her choice to become a journalist.

"You become so overwhelmed by the events that somehow you don't feel the fear," she tells us, adding that growing up in Iran during the Revolution made her accustomed to living in a fearful climate, and she didn't realize just how stressful it was until she left the country.

Fathi's new memoir, The Lonely War (out Dec. 9) chronicles the aftermath of the revolution and how it affected her personally.

The way Fathi weaves Iran's narrative with her own makes for a compelling read. She tells us that one reason she wrote the book is to reverse stereotypes people have about Iran. This even presented itself when she was finalizing the book's cover.

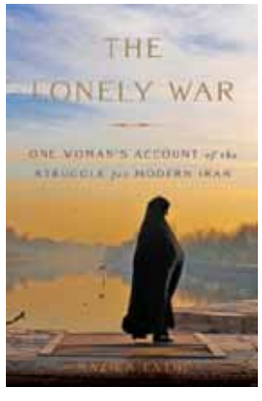
"The publisher said people wouldn't know this was a book about Iran unless we put a woman wearing a chador on the cover," Fathi says.

"Whenever someone wants to use an image to represent Iran, it's a picture of a woman in a chador. This is such a cliché, both for the regime and here in the West. Iranian women want to be free with how they dress. You hardly ever come across a woman who lives here, in a free country, and wears the chador."

In the end, Fathi took her publisher's advice and she's ultimately happy with the cover.

"I hope once people read the book that these are not true perceptions of the country and its people."

Fathi says another misconception is that nuclear talk is the most important issue to the Iranian people. "They don't care about it. This is the most important issue in America's foreign policy and Israel's foreign policy but, for Iranians, it's a minor issue."



Quoted

"The younger generation is vying for more personal freedom. They're looking for an excuse to show their solidarity."

Author Nazila Fathi

Instead, she says they care about gaining more personal freedoms. As the middle class has grown — it now accounts for more than 70 per cent of the country's population — Fathi says the people see freedoms that exist elsewhere and they want them.

When Iranian pop-singer Morteza Pashaei died of cancer Nov. 14 at the age of 30, thousands of Iranians flooded the streets to mourn for him.

"Women, who are not permitted to sing in public, were singing his songs," Fathi says. "It's a sign that the younger generation is vying for more personal freedom. They're looking for an excuse to show their solidarity."

It's a battle the Iranian people are still fighting and Fathi's voice is just one of 77 million — albeit a strong one. Her story is worth hearing; she did risk her life to tell it.

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Guess who'll get the most Grammy nods

Will the Grammys be Drunk In Love with Beyoncé or will they fall for the sad, soulful sound of Sam Smith?
The Recording Academy will announce the nominees for the 57th annual Grammy Awards on Friday, so here's how we think it will play out

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sam and Sia

Sam Smith is a shoo-in for the top categories, including best album for In the Lonely Hour; song and record for Stay With Me; and best new artist. He could also earn nominations in non-pop categories. A remix for Stay With Me, by Mary J. Blige, could compete in R&B; a remix of I'm Not the Only One with A$AP Rocky could contend for best rap/sung collaboration; and his guest appearance on Naughty Boy's La La La could be up for best dance recording.

Sia, too, could be swimming in a sea of nominations, thanks to her skilled songwriting and solo breakthrough. She's written songs for Beyoncé, Katy Perry, Eminem, Maroon 5 and Shakira. She also had her first No. 1 album with 1000 Forms of Fear and a huge hit with Chandelier.

Happily ever after

Although Pharrell's Happy was released before Grammy eligibility — in June 2013 as part of Despicable Me 2 — he submitted a live version of the song, so he has a chance of earning nominations for record of the year and best pop solo performance.

John Legend is in similar shoes: All of Me was released before eligibility, but he could earn a nomination for the live rendition.

Live songs have won in the past: Adele won best pop solo performance for Set Fire to the Rain a year after she dominated the Grammys with her album 21.

Ariana and Iggy

Although Ariana Grande and Iggy Azalea both have a strong chance for best new artist, they could cancel each other out when it comes to song and record of the year. Azalea's Fancy is most likely to be up for top-song honours, but the votes could split between that and Grande's Problem.

Azalea, though, should be a top contender in the rap categories, and Grande could earn a nomination for best pop vocal album for My Everything, as well as nods in the R&B categories.

Ariana Grande

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Beyoncé and beyond

If Beyoncé doesn't dominate in the nominations, it will be just as surprising as the release of her self-titled album last year. The pop queen could finally earn the coveted album of the year, since the release of Beyoncé was earth-shattering and well-received. One thing's for sure: The singer, who already owns 17 Grammys, will easily sweep the R&B categories.

Other notable nods

- **Hot or cold?** Frozen may be up for best album since it is the year's bestselling album with 3.6 million units sold.
- **What's shaking.** While Taylor Swift's album 1989 will qualify next year, her hit Shake It Off could be up for best song, record and pop solo performance this year.
- **Respect your elders.** Barbra Streisand, whose duets album Partners debuted at No.1 and is one of the year's top sellers, could earn several nominations. Tony Bennett, who released a duet album of standards with Lady Gaga, could also compete in the pop and jazz categories.

Allison Williams ready to soar as Peter Pan

Live television. The Girls actor realizes a childhood dream as she takes the lead in NBC's Peter Pan Live! musical

"Losing your shadow — What is *that* about?" muses Allison Williams. "As a kid you just accept it. But as an adult, I've spent a lot of time thinking about what it means."

Williams, at 26 best-known for the HBO series Girls, feels her life since childhood has pointed toward tonight at 8 p.m. EST, when she (and her shadow) will headline NBC's Peter Pan Live!

As a toddler, she was already listening to the Broadway recording of Peter Pan, and she viewed the 1960 NBC telecast starring Mary Martin countless times.

She even played Peter Pan with her grandparents.

"It was the only way they could get me into the bathtub," she recalls. "My grandmother would be Wendy, and she would take a toothpick and dental floss and pretend to sew my shadow on while I was splashing around. My father was Captain Hook. That was our game."

Allison Williams as Peter Pan in the musical version of Peter Pan Live! VIRGINIA SHERWOOD/NBC/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"My grandmother would be Wendy, and she would take a toothpick and dental floss and pretend to sew my shadow on while I was splashing around. My father was Captain Hook. That was our game."

Allison Williams on playing Peter Pan with her grandparents

Soon after last November's triumphant live telecast of The Sound of Music, NBC declared Peter Pan as this year's musical.

"From the second they announced it, I was emailing my agents constantly. I was sending them tapes of me singing Never Never Land."

Then she learned that Christopher Walken had been signed as the villainous pirate Captain Hook.

"I thought, 'What a cool choice!' And my desperation level went through the roof. Then finally the call came this summer, 'Would you like to do Peter Pan?'"

Here was a dream role that called for Williams to sing, dance, fight, master a British accent and, most challenging of all, fly.

"At first, to face a specific direction was hard. To land without looking down was hard. To maintain your body in a position where people don't see the harness was hard. Then you want to put your own personality into the flying style, to come up with tricks and positions that are original."

And working all this out, "you can't be up there too long at a time," she adds, "or you'll get sore. But it's soooo great. It's wickedly fun!"

It's as if she were born to be aloft in this role, and clearly she deems it a sacred trust, one about to come true, live, for an audience of millions.

"I will take very, very good care of Peter," she vows. "I promise. I promise."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Serious computer gamers are jumping to the cloud

As many as 150 million people will be streaming video games over the Internet by the end of next year, predicts market research firm Strategy Analytics.

Accessing serious games used to require a serious PC, a PlayStation 4 or an Xbox One.

But any computer or tablet can become gaming devices if the heavy graphics and processing are done in the cloud.

However, streaming does require high-speed Internet access and may result in lower-quality graphics.

AFP

Console wars

One reason PlayStation4 is outselling Xbox One is Sony's cloud gaming service. It lets owners stream their favourite games from older PlayStations.

Millions of video-game players already use streaming services such as PlayStation Now or Nvidia Grid. ISTOCK

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Ed Sheeran ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Cuddly, ginger and British, Ed Sheeran is the top dog at Spotify. Sorry, Taylor

Who's the undisputed king of online music? Ed Sheeran is.

The cuddly British ginger was the most-streamed artist in 2014, according to Spotify, with a staggering 860 million individual streams of his songs.

And his album, X, was the most-streamed album globally, with 430 million listens.

I guess that month I spent streaming the Flash Gordon soundtrack on repeat didn't make as much of an impact as I'd hoped. And, of course, there's no mention of Spotify-ditching Taylor Swift in the report, so maybe Sheeran's win should come with an asterisk.

Now, for some truly terrifying numbers: Spotify's more than 50 million registered users streamed more than seven billion hours of music this year — adding up to about 800,000 years of music and maybe a few annoying audiobook ads.

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

Gaga isn't Swift's lover, but she's into it if Taylor is

NED EHRBAR
Metro in Hollywood

During a recent visit to Howard Stern's radio show, Lady Gaga set the record straight about her and another pop music titan. Stern pressed Gaga with, "Someone called in and said that you are now a lover of Taylor Swift's, that the two of you are making love to one another."

That guy, such a way with words. Anyway, Gaga insists there's nothing of the sort going on — although she'd be totally down if Swift wanted to give it a whirl.

"I don't think she would be into that," Gaga replied, adding later, "If she's into that, she can call me."

In a totally Gaga move, the Bad Romance singer revealed she likes Swift because Swift listens to her music, a piece of info Gaga picked up from a stylist they share. According to Gaga, Swift "was doing a shoot and he was in there styling her … and he goes, 'Taylor Swift is in here blasting Artpop so loud, and she is dancing and she is posing,' and I said to myself, 'I like this girl.'"

Twitter

@idinamenzel
I'm in awe of the moms who drop their kids off at school and actually put on a cute outfit. Pjs and biker boots for me.

@ABFalecbaldwin
I want to be ambassador to Spain. I was actually, on a soap opera.

@ConanOBrien
As we get closer and closer to the end of this tweet, I think it's important that we lower our expectations.

Michael Fassbender

Seems Michael is sweet on a surfing Swede

There's a new target for the jealous ire of all the Michael Fassbender fans out there, and her name is Alicia Vikander. Fassbender and the Swedish actress are reportedly dating after playing husband and wife in the upcoming film The Life Between Oceans. They've most recently been seen out surfing together in Australia, which I guess constitutes a date. While reps for Fassbender and Vikander declined to comment, there's always an anonymous source willing to chime in: "Michael and Alicia are casually dating, spending a lot of time together," the source tells E! News.

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The Daily Dish

COUPLE CAN'T STAY OUT OF THE KITCHEN

In a twist of fate, a local couple can't stop the urge to stay home and cook dinner after switching to new OxiClean™ Dishwasher Detergent Paks. Amy of Grand Prairie told The Daily Dish "I can honestly say WOW." And the switch didn't just impress Amy,

*"Even my husband notices the difference!"**
— Amy, Grand Prairie

"even my husband notices the difference!"* after discovering that his tough, baked on messes came out sparkling clean. Seeing the difference in how clean their dishes came out has led to a new sparkle from their dishes, and their meals together.

Mothers agree cleaner dishes save time, and their nails.

Mothers rejoiced today as it was announced that using a combination of OxiClean™ Extreme Power Crystals™ Dishwasher Detergent Paks and OxiClean™ Dishwashing 2-in-1 Booster + Rinse Agent has finally made dishes clean enough to eat off of. "This is a big win for nails everywhere" said one local woman who is no stranger to chipping baked on dirt off of cookware. Manicurists in the area have yet to comment on the matter.

Cleaning is now child's play

After a turn of events, a suburban mom is 4X happier after switching to OxiClean™ Extreme Power Crystals™ Dishwasher Detergent Paks. Seeing how easy and effective they are, without having to pre-wash, has not only cut down chore time and improved dish conditions, but also "allows me to spend more of my time with the kids instead of scrubbing dirty dishes," the mother dished. Since the switch, Noelle is spending less time in the kitchen and more time with her little ones.

*All stories depicted within this advertisement are fictional in nature. *Quotes are from real consumer reviews submitted for OxiClean™ Extreme Power Crystals™ Dishwasher Detergent Paks and OxiClean™ Dishwashing 2-in-1 Booster + Rinse Agent on ChickAdvisor.com as of November 21, 2014. Reviewers received free sample.*

Clean the dirtiest dishes with OxiClean™ Dishwasher Products.

95% OF CHICKS DIG IT† ChickAdvisor.com

†Source: ChickAdvisor.com reviews for OxiClean™ Extreme Power Crystals™ Dishwasher Detergent Paks. Percent of chicks who "dig it" as of November 21, 2014. Reviewers received free sample.

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The boys of the bash

There's no need for a simple two-button navy blue affair this holiday season. Whether you're picking something new for a party or on the hunt for the perfect present for a sartorially savvy friend, here's our pick of the season's best suiting with a fun, festive edge.

AFP

Auld Lang Syne

This Black Watch tartan tuxedo jacket is perfect for adding a little extra fun to formal occasions. The matching wool trousers ($265) are by no means a must, but hey, why not? It's the most wonderful time of the year!

J. Crew Ludlow Tuxedo Jacket in Black Watch, $525, jcrew.com

Holiday blues

As ever, H&M, the high-street brand, has some fun options. Try this cotton-blend blazer in an Oxford weave for an elegant light-blue solution to the Christmas party conundrum. Wear it with a thin knit or polo neck for a chic look.

H&M Slim-fit Oxford-weave Blazer, $69.95, hm.com/ca

Denim tailoring

This washed denim sport coat can be paired with a pair of crisp, white trousers for a very modern take on a classic suit look.

Brooks Brothers Washed Denim Sport Coat, $238.80, brooksbrothers.com

Joining fashionable forces

Theory x Mr Porter menswear capsule on sale now

Theory has designed a 17-piece capsule collection for Mr Porter, now available around the world. The clothes range from shirts, jackets and coats to trousers, and also include a couple of suiting options, all in Theory's trademark mix of minimalist designs with modern materials and technical touches.

"The simplistic elegance of this collection perfectly captures the spirit of the Theory esthetic, and their modern approach to design make this a great fit for the Mr Porter customer," outlined Mr Porter's Toby Bateman.

Key pieces include the 4-pocket field jacket in Teflon wool ($695), seen above. Prices for the collection as a whole range from $245 for the white or cotton poplin shirts, up to $1,145 for the leather jacket.

AFP

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Many brides saying ‘yes’ to a shorter dress

Style. From couture to affordable, more brides getting hitched in cropped gowns

Helen Bradley isn’t one of those women who fantasized about her wedding as a girl, so when the time came to tie the knot on the 10th tee of a golf course, she wanted to be relaxed, comfortable and economical.

A short gown was just right for her September nuptials, said the 27-year-old bank worker in Madison, Wis.

“I had tried on a few long dresses and none of them felt like me. My mom picked out the short dress from a sale rack and it’s rare that I would like anything that my mom picks out,” she said with a laugh.

Once the domain of older or remarrying brides, short gowns are enjoying a little more of the love, from luxury brands like Monique Lhuillier, Oscar de la Renta and Marchesa to more affordable offerings at David’s Bridal.

The short looks aren’t just stand-in dresses originally intended for bridesmaids or cocktail parties. Designers are offering a greater range of shorter styles as more brides break from tradition and personalize their weddings.

“A lot of people are doing more intimate settings, so a shorter dress just feels more appropriate. If they do the big wedding, some change into a shorter dress so they can dance and have a good time,” Lhuillier said.

Exactly how short is up to the bride. There are minis, high-low hemlines (high in the front and lower in the back), knee lengths, tea lengths below the knee and so-called “transformers,” where a long train or sheer skirt detaches to show off a short dress underneath.

Designer Zac Posen put his own sister in one of the convertibles — in red — for her 2004 wedding. “Her huge train came off to become a mini and she took it off to Judy Garland’s Zing! Went the Strings of My Heart,”’ he said. “It covered the grandeur of the ceremony and the fun of the party.”

Long gowns remain the clear majority of the $2.6 billion-a-year bridal gown market, noted Darcy Miller, editorial director for Martha Stewart’s bridal site, Marthastewartweddings.com.

But “more and more brides seem to be seeking no-fuss, lightweight and easier silhouettes,” she said. Some “want a dress they can run on the beach in or travel with to their destination wedding.”

At David’s Bridal, 26 of the 75 gowns launched for spring 2015 are short, said Anne Acierno, executive vice-president for design, merchandising and product development.

Posen creates luxury short looks but also includes a few in his Truly Zac Posen collection at David’s Bridal.

Among high-profile brides to go short recently were fashion ‘it’ girl Olivia Palermo and actress Cheryl Hines, who married Robert F. Kennedy Jr. last August in a strapless, white, tea-length creation.

Vera Wang makes short gowns too, in a range of price-points that include her White collection for David’s Bridal.

“I think you should wear what you feel most beautiful and most comfortable in, and also what is most you, most individual,” Wang said.

Shorter dresses can be less expensive — a huge factor for Bradley at her country club wedding before 125 guests.

Her dress cost $400. She spent another $100 on a chunky glass statement necklace with matching earrings, and $99 for a pair of 4-inch Calvin Klein heels in dusty gold with a T-strap and side buckle.

“I’m an accessory person, so I knew when I saw the dress it was a blank canvas,” Bradley said. “I could go out and pick the perfect necklace and the perfect shoes and you could see them.”

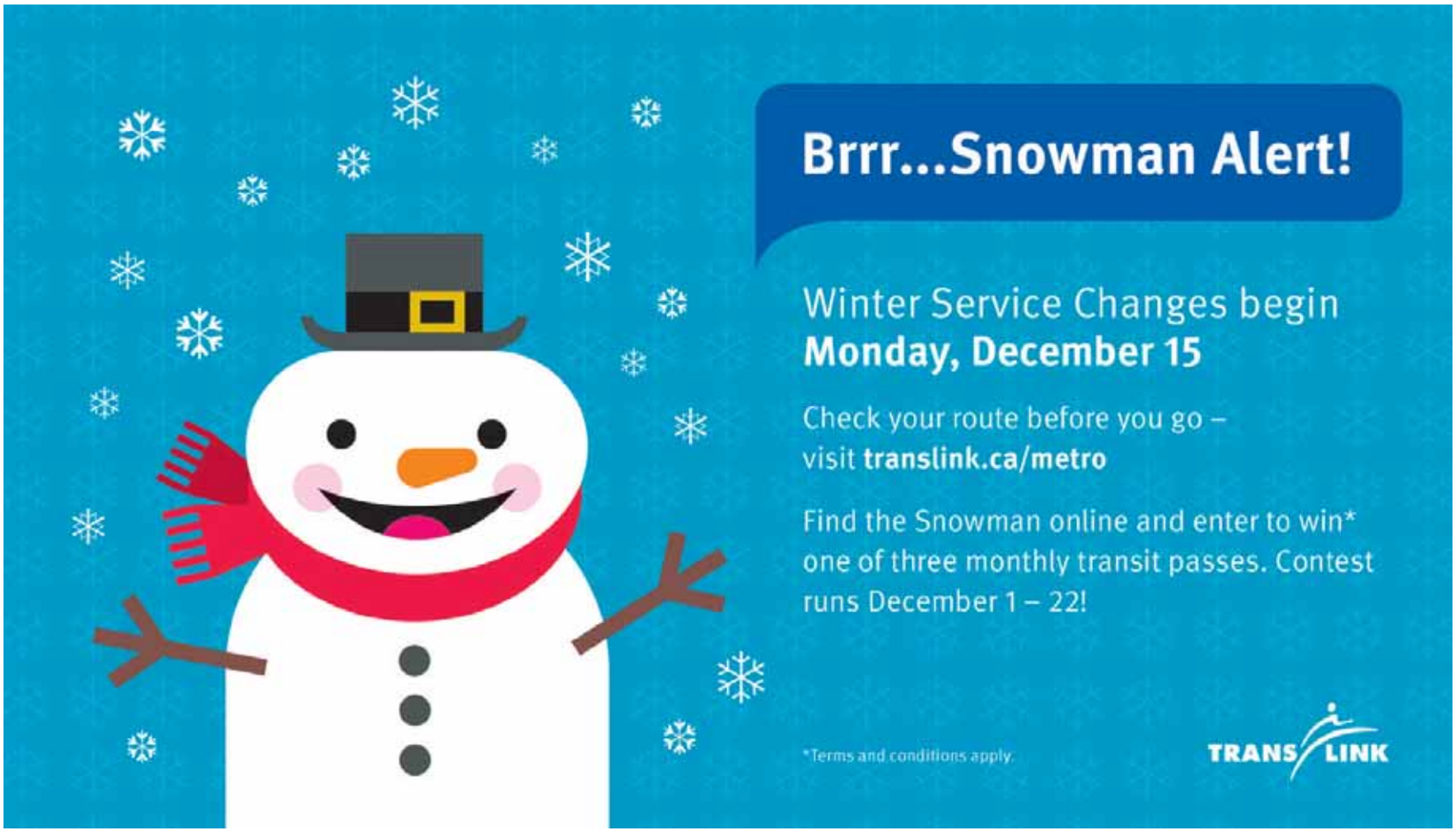
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ready to rock

“If they do the big wedding, some change into a shorter dress so they can dance and have a good time.”

Monique Lhuillier, bridal wear designer

A model wears the Arielle, and Ostrich feather mini with peek-a-boo crystal beading dress by Rivini by Rita Vinieris. RIVINI BY RITA VINIERIS / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS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Canadian street style

Spotted in: Toronto

Name: Brit

Age: 27

Occupation: Florist & Bartender

What she's wearing
Vintage 1950s Irving Posluns for La France coat, H&M sweater, vintage dress from VV, boots from the Bay and Coach purse.

Her inspiration
"I like to have fun with prints and silhouettes. I wear clothing that is comfortable and uber feminine. My style icons are the Olsen twins and my friends."

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Poncho perfection

The icy temps make it impossible to get out of bed. Now you can literally wear a blanket around all day thanks to this season's poncho trend.

AFP

H&M knit poncho

A camel-coloured poncho like this one is perfect for staying cozy in the office.
$35.95, HM.com

Topshop multi-stripe cape

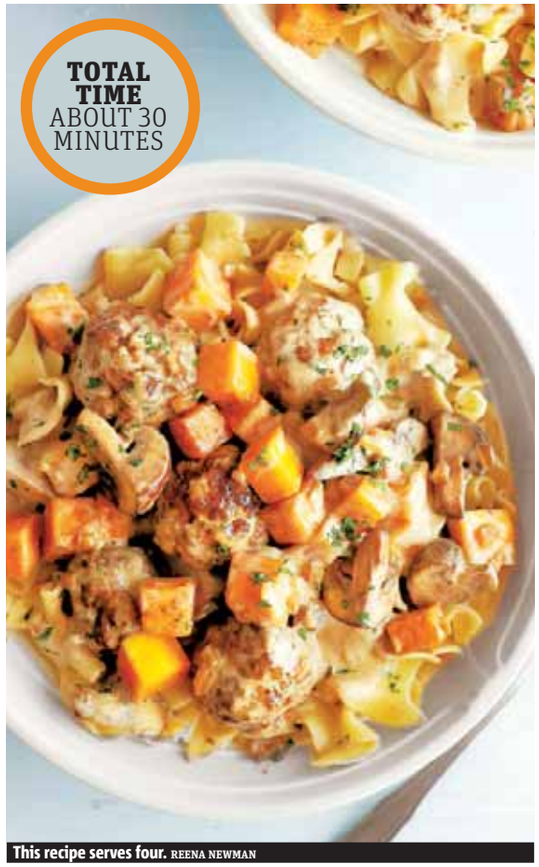
Add some boho into your wardrobe with a striped poncho.
$68, Topshop.com

Zara Two-tone poncho

So easy, so elegant, and most importantly, so warm.
$59.90, Zara.com

Squash moves past side dish duties

Swedish Meatballs with Squash & Mushroom Stroganoff. This hearty meal will warm you up on cold nights and can be served over a few different bases



This recipe serves four. REENA NEWMAN

"Chef Alexandra Feswick of Toronto's Drake Hotel shared this recipe with us after we tried her version at Terroir, Canada's largest annual food symposium," write Rob Firing, Ivy Knight and Kerry Knight in their book The Everyday Squash Cook.

"Tender meatballs, sweet squash and earthy mushrooms coated in a rich sauce make for a hearty and warming meal on a chilly evening. Her secret? A pinch of cardamom. It sounds crazy but just give it a try.

"Serve over brown rice or egg noodles, garnished with a little chopped parsley."

1. In a bowl, combine the beef and pork and season with salt and pepper to taste. Using palm of your hands, form meatballs (we make ours golf ball–size).

2. In a large, oiled saucepan over medium heat, cook the meatballs in batches until browned all over. Transfer the cooked meatballs to a plate.

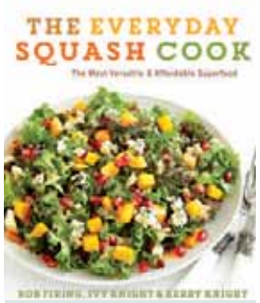
3. Drain all but 1 tablespoon fat from the pan. Sauté the onion until softened, about 1 1/2 minutes. Add the mushrooms and squash and stir to combine. Stir in the butter and flour. Cook, stirring constantly, for 1 to 2 minutes, until the flour darkens. Stir in the chicken stock, then the cream and sour cream. Add the cardamom, soy sauce and allspice and stir well. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, if needed. Return the cooked meatballs to the pan, gently stir to combine and cook for about 5 minutes, until the squash is cooked through. If the mixture is too thick, add a splash of water or milk. Serve immediately, sprinkled with chopped parsley, if desired. **RECIPE FROM THE EVERYDAY SQUASH COOK BY ROB FIRING, IVY KNIGHT & KERRY KNIGHT © 2014. PHOTOGRAPHY © REENA NEWMAN. PUBLISHED BY HARPERCOLLINS CANADA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.**

Ingredients

- 1/2 lb medium ground beef
- 1/2 lb medium ground pork
- Kosher salt and fresh cracked black pepper
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 2 large button or cremini mushrooms, chopped
- 2 cups peeled chopped butternut squash
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 1 can (14 oz) chicken stock
- 1/2 cup whipping (35%) cream
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- Pinch of ground cardamom
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1/4 tsp ground allspice
- Chopped fresh parsley, garnish

Cookbook of the Week

Squash in all its various glories



Butternut, pumpkin and acorn may be the most popular of squash, but The Everyday Squash Cook introduces us to many other varieties and ways you can enjoy them.

The release by Rob Firing, Ivy Knight and Kerry Knight features more than 100 recipes and includes tips on handling, cutting and storing squash.

Among the recipes are Squash Fried Rice, Fish and Old Bay Squash Chips, Ricotta-Stuffed Zucchini Blossoms and Butternut Cranberry Pudding Cake.

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Rugged gifts for lumbersexuals

Whether your lumberjack sleeps in a studio apartment or a log cabin, any plaid-clad beardyman will appreciate gifts that add a bit of retro style to his space this Christmas

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

The cords are stacked

Fill his sofa with pillows that give the look of a well-stocked log pile. Wood Stump Velvet Cushions, $20, Simons.ca.

Patch the woo

What happens to a lumberjack's jeans once they're worn out? Handmade Denim Patch Rug (5'x7'), $280, eCarpetGallery.com.

The scent of whiskers

Tell him to keep the beard while bringing back memories of the barber shop. Bromley Barber Shop Vanilla Shaving Cream Candle, from $10. Homesense.ca

Foam and substance

Create a dense, soft foam to top his favourite craft beer. Norm Architects MENU Beer Foamer, $33, TheBay.com.

Ready to crack open a brew

The perfect stocking stuffer for the hip beer connoisseur. John Deere Bottle Opener, $30, JohnDeere.ca.

In the grind scheme of things

Let your lumberjack chop the wood while you grind some freshly roasted coffee beans. HARIO Small Coffee Grinder, $40, Amazon.ca.

ALL PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED

Festive cocktail party tips

Style gurus Steven Sabados and Chris Hyndman know hosting a cocktail party is a fabulous way to celebrate the holiday season. But without a proper plan in place, your festive affair could be forever remembered as an epic fail. They asked their resident entertaining expert Cocktail Deeva to share her tips on how to throw the ultimate cocktail soiree that will not only impress your guests, but also help you keep your cool. Steven and Chris' holiday specials air from Dec. 15-19 at 2 p.m. EST on CBC Television.

ALL TEXT PROVIDED BY STEVEN AND CHRIS. PHOTOS BY ALEXIS GLINERT.

Invitations come first

Remember, your party is only as good as your guest list, so ask yourself: • Who is coming to the party? Friends? Family? Work colleagues? Will there be kids? • If it's a work event, keep things professional and avoid mixing groups. Be clear about what kind of party it is. • Sending a paper invitation is a classy way of inviting small groups. For larger groups, send an online invitation. It's fast and effective.

Timing and food are crucial

If your party starts between 6:30 and 7:30 p.m., you better be feeding your guests more than a shrimp ring! But if things get underway at 8:30 p.m. or later, serving cocktails and hors d'oeuvres is acceptable.

If you have a limited amount of finger food, arrange the items on a tray and pass it around the room. That'll ensure your Uncle Bob takes one item instead of six, as it's harder for people to pig out when someone is looking at you.

If you're going buffet style, place food in different sections of the house to keep people moving.

Place a small carton or bin in a visible place so folks have a place to throw their used picks and napkins (people always forget that one).

Make sure to give yourself time to set everything up before the party begins. Get ahead by placing dishes out days before and using labels to indicate what's going where.

Holiday Fizz Cocktail

Step 1: Make dark lemonade

Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup water
- Zest and juice of 2 lemons
- 1/4 rubbed sage
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 cloves
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon Kitchen Bouquet
- Carbonated water

Combine water, lemon zest, nutmeg, cloves, sage and sugar. Continually stir and boil for about a minute until the sugar is dissolved.

Remove from heat and stir in the lemon juice and Kitchen Bouquet. Let cool, then strain.

Add roughly 1/3 cup of this syrup to 1 cup of carbonated water or combine to suit your taste. If kept in the refrigerator, dark lemonade can last up to 3 weeks.

Step 2: Add the booze!

- 2 ounces dark lemonade
- 2 ounces gin
- 1 ounce soda
- Garnish with rosemary sprigs

Set the mood

Entertaining 101: Turn off those ugly lights! Strong, overhead lighting can create unflattering shadows on people's faces. Dim your lights, if you can, or use candles to make your guests glow. • Curate a music playlist that keeps the party going. Don't just plug in your personal iPod, hit shuffle and hope for the best. There's something about going from Beyoncé to Bob Dylan that doesn't feel right. • Also be mindful of what music you're playing when you want people to leave — opt for slow jams when it's time to say goodnight. • If you want to go the extra mile, load your playlist onto inexpensive USB sticks and hand them out to guests before they leave. People will love the take-home gift!

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While trimmed trees and wreath-adorned doors offer an instant infusion of holiday style, these decorative displays are often dismantled mere weeks after being put in place. Design experts share tips on selecting trendy and traditional decor items that can be featured prominently well into the New Year

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Bend the Yule with seasonless accents

Retro stag party in a bowl

A pedestal bowl with antler detail channels a vintage country look, a furnishing trend that is still going strong.

HOMESENSE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rustic chic. Into the woods

It's time to bring the great outdoors in-house, as nature-inspired elements are proving to have evergreen appeal.

The last five years have seen a resurgence in rusticity and reclaimed furnishings channelling the vintage, country look, said Ottawa-based interior designer and Rona expert Ulya Jensen.

For a festive twist on the trend, Jensen suggested displaying multiple cork wreaths in a front entryway that can be used beyond the season as photo or mirror frames.

From prints on pillows to forms fashioned from glass, Jensen said images of animals are "huge in decor," evidenced by whimsical woodland creatures displayed as ornaments.

"You could take a couple of the owls, a couple of the birds and set them in a little ficus tree that you might have on your condo patio for year-round," she said.

"In kids' rooms, you could make collections of them and put a bunch of the animals in shadow boxes or use them as art on the wall."

Jensen said replacing a bowl of Christmas balls with acorn ornaments can make a really nice centrepiece that conjures a "very woodsy, rustic feel. A cluster of birch tree candleholders in varying heights can also work well as a focal point in a small space, she noted.

"That would be big impact but not necessarily to have to sprawl all over the apartment to get it, but those I love because that is year-round, for sure," she said.

Birch tree candle holder

RONA HOME & GARDEN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Forest creatures make their presence felt

A felted wool moose cushion plays right into decor's current love for anything featuring woodland animals.

HOMESENSE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Beyond tea lights

Whitewashed with an antique appeal, these metal Sadi Lanterns from EQ3 can be used as a tabletop light, patio decor or for a touch of ambient light around the house. Sandra Farfan, in-house designer at EQ3, suggested displaying berries, fern leaves or birch tree branches inside as a festive centrepiece.

EQ3 FURNITURE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tuckaway trees

Seeking a switch-up from the towering Christmas tree or its tabletop counterpart?

- Farfan suggested trying out a decorative, fold-down wood tree which can be painted and displayed with ornaments during the festive season, and grouped in clusters or displayed solo afterwards.
- "It doesn't have to be watered, and at the same time, after Christmas, you can carry it through and use it as an accent piece."

Christopher Decorative Tree

EQ3 FURNITURE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Timeless decor

Go glam with Art Deco-inspired pieces

Art Deco mirrored boxes

HOMESENSE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Steeped in black with metallic accents, Art Deco-inspired geometric prints may channel the Roaring '20s, but offer a timeless alternative to seasonless style.

Homesense design expert Tamara Robbins Griffith said a ceramic vase adorned with a graphic pattern can serve as a great centrepiece pre- and post-holidays. While the festive season is in swing, it can be used to house a floral arrangement of wintergreens, later shifting to a mantel or sideboard as a solo statement piece, she noted. Geometric-patterned cushions also team well with pillows that bring the bling with embroidered, hand-beaded designs that can be used as a luxurious accent well into winter.

Shimmer. Rose gold shines

Twinkling lights bring their share of shine, but decorative gilded pieces like urns and vases can also add much-needed shimmer.

"I think it's all about the versatility nowadays," said HomeSense design expert Tamara Robbins Griffith.

"We have such stunning decorative boxes with mirrored finishes and faux leather finishes and that's equally at home on your dresser as it is on the living room shelf — depending on what you want to store and organize. I kind of love that multi-purpose aspect of it, and I think people are getting more and more comfortable playing around with styling and decorating in their homes and moving things around to a new space."

Robbins Griffith said rose gold is huge for the holidays, but for individuals keen on embracing deeper blush-toned shades, winter pinks can pair well with pieces from previous seasons.

"You can certainly mix a few pink ornaments in with existing metallics, whites that you've already got in your collection. I love the femininity and the shimmer and shine," she said. "Winter in Canada is a long, long season, so having mercury glass and a little bit of iridescence just kind of reflects light in your home."

Robbins Griffith said grouping gold, copper and bronze items together can work well provided they all have the same finish, be it polished or brushed. They can also be dispersed throughout the home, such as a mirrored tray for the mantle or dining room filled with ornaments that are best showcased standalone.

Etched rose gold mercury glass urn.

HOMESENSE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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FAMILY FUN GUIDE

BY STEPHANIE ORFORD

Where to go, what to do and how to get there. Here are this week's activity listings

LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE

As if the Capilano Suspension Bridge Park wasn't spectacular enough — wait until you see it at Christmastime. Prepare to be dazzled by hundreds of lights and the world's tallest living Christmas tree. Until Jan. 3, 2015. Visit capbridge.com/explore/canyon-lights for tickets and times.

ON TOP OF CHRISTMAS

Celebrate the season from the top of Vancouver at Grouse Mountain Resort. There's ice skating, sleigh rides, a Gingerbread Village, Santa's Workshop and more. Runs until Dec. 24, from 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Regular Alpine Experience Ticket Rates. Go to grousemountain.com for more.

SHINE THE LIGHT

Bring or make your own homemade lantern, make an ornament, decorate a cookie, hear stories from Father Christmas, and enjoy the lantern celebration featuring Place des Arts' Musical Theatre Company. Place des Arts in Coquitlam, Dec. 6, from 5-7:30 p.m. For more, visit placedesarts.ca.

SANTA CLAUS PARADE

On Sunday, the 11th annual Rogers Santa Claus Parade runs along West Georgia and finishes at Howe and Davie. Catch dancing, colourful floats, festive music, and more. Festivities start at 10:30 a.m. Donations go to the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society. Go to rogerssantaclausparade.com for more.

OWL SHOW AT THE RICHMOND

Meet wise avians up close and personal on Sunday, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Richmond Nature Park in Richmond. Admission by donation. For more, visit richmond.ca.

KITCHEN PHYSICS

Why does toast always land jelly-side-down? This question and other weird science will be addressed at the 11th Annual Faraday Show at UBC, Hebb Building, on Dec. 7 from 2-3:30 p. m. Free. Non-perishable food items support the Greater Vancouver Food Bank. Go to outreach.phas.ubc.ca/faraday for more.

"Someday I'd like to play on Team Canada." – *Madison, age 8*

Every kid has a someday. It may be something fantastical like flying to the moon, something practical like following their dad into construction or something we all can relate to like wanting to be surrounded by love. No matter what it is, we want to give them the support they need to get there. That's why we're pledging $100 million over five years to help over a million children do just that. Let's make every kid's someday™ happen.

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4 SPORTS

Davis Cup action returning to UBC

Tennis. Canada will take on Japan in World Group first-round tie

Milos Raonic celebrates his win over Italy's Andreas Seppi on April 7, 2013, at the Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Sports Centre. In defeating Italy, Canada moved into the Davis Cup World Group semifinals. DON MACKINNON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Martin Laurendeau and Canada's Davis Cup team have fond memories of the West Coast.

Having spent years toiling at the international tennis tournament's regional level, Canada qualified for the World Group in 2012 and hosted France in first-round play.

While the visitors won the tie 4-1 at the University of British Columbia, Laurendeau says the result was a watershed moment for a young Canadian team that included Milos Raonic and Vasek Pospisil.

"It was a very important turn for us in the sense that we got our feet wet into the World Group again," said Laurendeau. "For our young guys, Vasek and Milos, it was really important they go through that as a learning curve and a reference."

Canada went on to make it all the way to the World Group semifinal in 2013 for the first time ever after victories over Spain and Italy at UBC and will look to recapture that energy in March when the country hosts Japan in World Group first-round action at the Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Sports Centre.

"It's reassuring for us to go to a place where we've had a lot of success, where we know the crowd is phenomenal, where we get a court that plays to our advantage and just have an opportunity to keep creating history," Laurendeau said at Wednesday's announcement. "We had a good run last year and we want to do better, we want to go further and we're going to start with Japan."

The tie that will take place from March 6 to 8 is a rematch of the countries' 2014 first-round meeting last winter, which Japan won 4-1.

"There's a great sense of familiarity coming back here," said Laurendeau, who was without Raonic and Pospisil in Tokyo because of injury. "Players do like to go back to a place where they've had some good successes. It's a bit comforting, in a way." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Home-court advantage

As hosts, Canada has the opportunity to select the surface and the setup of the 5,000-seat Doug Mitchell Thunderbird Sports Centre, which is critical when taking into account big hitters like Milos Raonic and Vasek Pospisil.

MLB. Saunders trade all but ends Cabrera era in T.O.

Michael Saunders
GETTY IMAGES

The Toronto Blue Jays acquired outfielder Michael Saunders from the Seattle Mariners on Wednesday in exchange for left-hander J.A. Happ in a deal that essentially closes the door on the possibility of free agent Melky Cabrera returning to the team.

Saunders, a 28-year-old Victoria native, is expected to be the everyday left-fielder for the Blue Jays.

Happ was uneven over parts of three seasons in Toronto. He was 11-11 in 2014 with a 4.22 ERA over 158 innings.

His departure improves Aaron Sanchez's chances of becoming a starter.

Saunders appeared in 78 games and hit .273 with eight homers and 34 RBIs for Seattle. He's shown potential but has struggled with staying healthy.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

In Texas. Howe treated for dehydration: Family

Gordie Howe
GETTY IMAGES FILE

Gordie Howe was hospitalized for dehydration, not another stroke, his family has said in a statement.

The fear was that the 86-year-old had another severe stroke Monday after showing diminished consciousness for more than 30 minutes, the family said.

Howe was transported to University Medical Center, in Lubbock, Texas, where an MRI revealed that he did not have another severe stroke like the one that initially hospitalized him in late October.

He is being treated for dehydration, and there are other problems with Howe's condition.

"He is having difficulty eating solid foods at this time, has slurred speech and has been unable to walk for more than three weeks now," the family said.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Death of a legend

The sport of hockey was "elevated forever" by Jean Béliveau's "character, dignity and class," NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said Wednesday after the iconic player's death at the age of 83. Here are just some of the highlights from Béliveau's storied career with the Montreal Canadiens:

Stanley Cups won

17

His name is on the Stanley Cup a record 17 times, having won the mug 10 times as a player and seven as an executive.

Awards

Art Ross Trophy for most points (1956), Hart Trophy as NHL MVP (1956, 1964), Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP (1965).

Points

1,219

When Béliveau retired in 1971, he was the Habs' career leader in points with 1,219. That's 507 goals and 712 assists.

Playoff points

176

He's the NHL's all-time leading playoff scorer with 176 points in 162 games.

Jean Béliveau in April 1967
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE

These are the possible Canucks at the juniors

THE HOCKEY NEWS
Matt Larkin
vancouver@metronews.ca

The world junior championship returns to Canada this holiday season, in Toronto and Montreal, in what may be the most hyped edition in years.

The favourites, Canada and the U.S., are more stacked than they've been in a long time, largely thanks to Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel, respectively, who are poised to become the NHL's best 1-2 punch of star power since Sidney Crosby and Alex Ovechkin.

Which Vancouver Canucks players have strong chances to make it at the WJC? Here are some names to consider:

Cole Cassels, C, USA: Much like his dad, Cassels is a strong playmaker who looks to pass before he shoots. He's lit it up in the Ontario Hockey League with 39 points in 22 games.

The Canucks' Thatcher Demko is a favourite to start in net for Team USA.
BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

Anton Cederholm, D, Sweden: The guy is a brick at six-foot-two and 214 pounds. An Ulf Samuelsson type. He's played in the Western Hockey League this year, so he won't feel out of place on North American ice at the WJC.

Thatcher Demko, G, USA: This is the guy Vancouver expects to succeed Ryan Miller in a few years. He's big and he plays for a winning program at Boston College. He's the favourite to start in net for Team USA.

Bo Horvat, C, Canada: Hockey Canada will know by Dec. 19 if Horvat makes the trip to Toronto and Montreal, but it looks unlikely. The Canucks have been impressed enough with his play to keep him past nine games and activate the first year of his entry-level contract.

Jake Virtanen, RW, Canada: A physical sniper who opted for off-season shoulder surgery but rejoined the WHL's Calgary Hitmen in October. The 19 points in 18 games aren't bad. He needs Canada as much as it needs him.

We'll see who makes the final roster cuts, but each of these Vancouver blue-chippers have a strong chance to play.

On a roll

Raptors set Jazz to the tune of a 19-point win

Kyle Lowry scored a season-high 39 points on 13-of-22 shooting as the Toronto Raptors sent the Utah Jazz to their seventh straight loss, 123-104 Wednesday night.

Greivis Vasquez and Lou Williams each had 17 for the Raptors.

Derrick Favors and Enes Kanter scored 19 points apiece for Utah. Gordon Hayward added 16 points and Trey Burke had 15 and eight assists for the Jazz, who trailed through the final three quarters.

Toronto faced little defensive resistance. The Raptors shot 45 of 79 overall, including 12 of 21 on 3-pointers.

Toronto scored on eight of its first nine possessions in the second quarter and by the time Lowry capped that stretch with a 3-pointer, the Raptors led 50-32.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

With heavy hearts

Game dedicated to Béliveau ends in loss for Habs

With their top defenceman out and a power play that is misfiring, a couple of fortuitous bounces were enough for the Minnesota Wild.

Jason Zucker and Jason Pominville scored improbable goals to lift the Wild to a 2-1 victory over the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday night.

Alex Galchenyuk scored in the final minute after Montreal pulled goalie Carey Price, who made 33 saves. The Canadiens are 1-3-1 in their past five games.

Playing with heavy hearts one day after the death of Hall of Famer Jean Béliveau, the Canadiens dedicated the game to the longtime captain who won 10 Stanley Cup titles as a player and seven more as an executive. All Montreal players wore No. 4 on their helmets. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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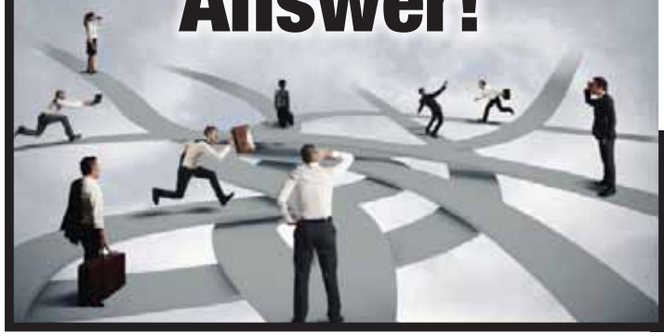

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Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Stay calm when dealing with relationship problems. According to the planets everything will come right in the end so why upset yourself?

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Do you focus on what others expect you to do or what you want to do? Only you can decide but if you try to get the best of both worlds you may end up with neither.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
There will be opportunities to improve yourself, personally and professionally, over the next few days but there will also be challenges that force you to make far-reaching changes.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
The only thing worse than allowing yourself to be anxious about a money matter is pretending there is nothing wrong at all. A sensible balance is needed to find a solution.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You can perform an important service for a colleague today, a service that will put them in your debt. It's nice to know you can call on a favour in return.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You must control any tendency you may have to go to extremes, especially when involved in demanding physical and mental activities. Balance.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
If you hope for the best today, you will get it. What you need to realize is that you always attract into your life the kind of luck you think you deserve.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
You may be in a serious frame of mind but not everyone shares your solemn outlook. Have you considered the possibility that they've got it right and you've got it wrong?

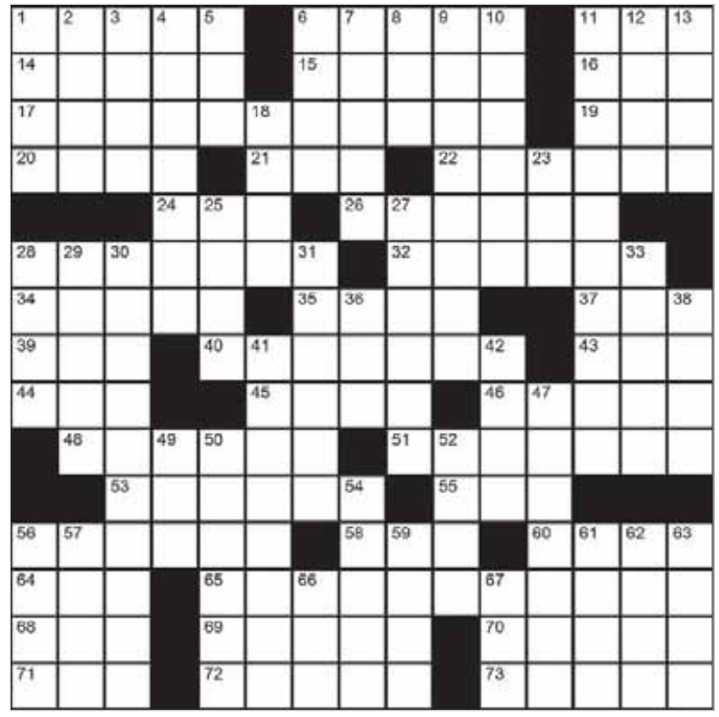
♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Today's Sun-Uranus link means there are major changes on the way, changes that will benefit you in so many ways. If there is a creative project you have been toying with now is the time to get serious about it.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You are in one of your rare extravagant moods and are determined to indulge. A few days from now you may regret spending so much on so little, but for now you don't care.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
What seems a major issue to some is no more than a sideshow to you. You're in one of those moods when you can't take anything too seriously.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
What occurs over the next 24 hours will remind you not all things in life are as predictable as you might like them to be.

Crossword: Canada Across and Down by Kelly Ann Buchanan



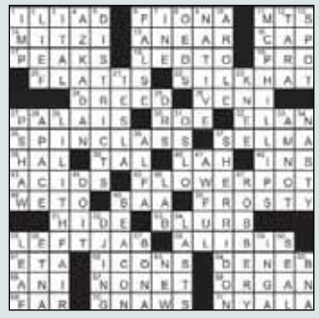
Across

1. Finely chop
6. Britney Spears, Princess __ __
11. Radio types, e.g.
14. Mid-'90s sitcom, "__ Own": 2 wds.
15. Airport arrival
16. Scoundrel
17. End a relationship: 3 wds.
19. Sash sort
20. Start to 'sack'
21. 'South' suffix
22. This battle is on!: 2 wds.
24. Tavern drink
26. Actor Gabe
28. Admiral in Antony and Cleopatra
32. Directs
34. Jean __ (Quebec pharmacy chain)
35. "The Godfather" (1972) role
37. 'Rem' ender (TV clicker)
39. Affixed, abbreviated
40. Trailblazer
43. Feminine side
44. Morse Code bit
45. 'Trick' suffix
46. Australia's gemstones
48. Dan Aykroyd's "Coneheads" (1993) character
51. Saskatchewan village; or, singer Aaron
53. Calgary band, __ and the Dark
55. Wilmington's US state
56. Safe place
58. Fruity drink
60. Chunks
64. Tokyo, formerly
65. Historic part of Quebec's largest city: 2 wds.
68. Hot Balloon link
69. "__ Gold" (1997)
70. Ron Weasley's li'l sister
71. 'Inc.' cousin
72. Cup: French
73. Haze/pollution mixtures

Down

1. Fake
2. Aerosmith's "Love __ __ Elevator"
3. The Big Easy
4. Criminal
5. Verdi aria: "__ Tu"
6. Alphabetic sequence
7. Get an 'F'
8. Gambling game, __ Gow
9. How Tiny Tim gets through the tulips: 2 wds.
10. Mortar and __
11. Canadian brand of whisky: 2 wds.
12. __ Wawa (SNL character)
13. Mix
18. Therm. reading
23. Freelancer's encl.
25. 5th Dimension's "__, __ and Away"
27. Sailor's 'backward'
28. Mil. school
29. __ _ '_' (Did fine on the exam)
30. __ House Provincial Historic Site (Home of Alberta's first Premier)
31. "_ __ sante!" (To your health!, in French)
33. Tranquil
36. Dvorak's "Symphony No. 9 __ _ Minor"
38. Massachusetts' motto starter
41. Ottawa-born country singer Kira
42. Amble
47. "Scott __ vs. the World" starring actor Michael Cera
49. Bucharest money
50. Certain canoe
52. Biblical garden
54. Titles
56. Authentic
57. Revise
59. Pharmacy quantity
61. Vintner's prefix
62. Loud sound
63. Singer Mr. Stone's
66. Cap-__-Rosiers (Village in Quebec, home of Canada's tallest lighthouse)
67. "30 Rock" sketch, '_ _ _ with Tracy Jordan'

Yesterday's Crossword

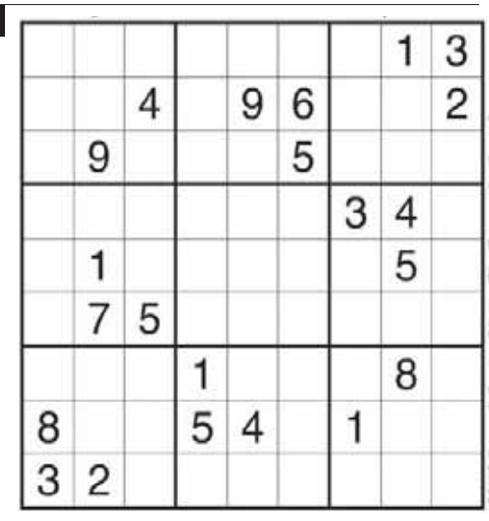


Online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



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Yesterday's Sudoku

9	3	4	6	2	5	1	7	8
6	7	5	3	8	1	4	9	2
1	8	2	7	4	9	5	3	6
8	5	3	4	9	2	7	6	1
4	9	7	1	6	8	3	2	5
2	6	1	5	3	7	9	8	4
7	1	8	9	5	6	2	4	3
3	2	9	8	1	4	6	5	7
5	4	6	2	7	3	8	1	9

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1 Based on latest competitive information available at time of printing. 2015 Colorado with available V6 engine. Fuel consumption ratings based on GM testing in accordance with new 2015 Model Year Government of Canada approved test methods. Refer to vehicles.nrcan.gc.ca for details. Your actual fuel consumption may vary. 2 Requires available 3.6L V6 engine. Based on WardsAuto.com 2014 Small Pickup segmentation and latest available competitive information. Excludes other GM vehicles. Before you buy a vehicle or use it for trailering, carefully review the trailering section of the Owner's Manual. The weight of passengers, cargo and options or accessories may reduce the amount you can tow. 3 Visit onstar.ca for coverage maps, details and system limitations. Services and connectivity may vary by model and conditions. OnStar with 4G LTE connectivity is available on select vehicle models and in select markets. Customers will be able to access OnStar services only if they accept the OnStar User Terms and Privacy Statement (including software terms). OnStar acts as a link to existing emergency service providers. After the trial period (if applicable), an active OnStar service plan is required.